

Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder: A Tale of Strategic Context and Operational Art in Iraq, 2004-2008

**A Monograph
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Abstract

BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: A TALE OF STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND OPERATIONAL ART IN IRAQ, 2004-2008 by Major Shawn M. Bault, US Army, 70 pages.

In January 2007, President of the United States George W. Bush announced a strategy called the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, a departure from the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* announced only thirteen months previous. Additionally, President Bush approved the deployment of five additional combat brigades in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. The so-called surge, as it became known, increased American troop levels by 30,000 and was thought to be the last hope to avert possible civil war in Iraq. In the ensuing months, sectarian violence decreased and the security situation steadily improved throughout Iraq. The surge drew resounding accolade as the impetus responsible for the dramatic turnaround. This dynamic provides a backdrop in which to analyze the significance that changes in strategic context had on operational planning within Multi-National Forces-Iraq before and after the surge. Campaign planning under the purview of Generals George Casey, Jr. and David H. Petraeus provide two relevant case studies demonstrating contrast in operational design and execution based on strategic context. This monograph examines the significant impact strategic context had operationally on the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose from 2004 through 2008 in Iraq.

From an operational perspective in Iraq, operational art, as defined by *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, evolved from Casey to Petraeus due to changes in strategic context from 2004 through 2008. A case study comparison of each campaign's design and execution revealed strategic context's significance. Strategic context presented each commander with opportunity and limitation. This dynamic framed their pursuit of respective strategic objectives. In analyzing their pursuit, current Army and joint doctrine underscored the applicability of operational art during counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. The elements of operational design and tenets of unified land operations highlighted strategic context's capacity to shape tactical actions. For operational planners going forward, this monograph underscores just how significant strategic context can be in maximizing tactical actions in time, space, and purpose from one operational command to another over time. This evolution in operational art encompassed the story of Casey and Petraeus as Commanders of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, countering the narrative and mystique surrounding the surge.

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Introduction

It was around seven o'clock in the morning on July 10, 2006 when masked gunmen appeared on the streets of Baghdad's Jihad neighborhood. The gunmen gathered in groups at intersections, forming their own checkpoints. Checking identification cards, the gunmen targeted Sunni males, forcing them into a waiting bus. The next day, local hospitals reported thirty-six dead bodies, indicating the captive's probable fate. Simultaneously, two car bombs exploded in eastern Baghdad, killing seven in Sadr City. Not to be out done, that evening another double car bomb ripped through a Shia mosque in north Baghdad, resulting in nineteen dead and fifty-nine wounded. While July 10 was a bad day in Baghdad, it was not atypical, exemplifying the ethno-sectarian strife that was so pervasive in Iraq in 2006.¹ With buildings reduced to rubble, trash engulfing streets, electric power non-existent, and the populace terrified, Baghdad neighborhoods were grim, dangerous, and lifeless.² Iraq was on the verge of civil war. However, by 2008, a much different narrative emerged as street life returned within Baghdad and surrounding areas. In Saba al-Bor, a town located just northwest of the capital, a mounted patrol from Bravo Troop, 2-14th Cavalry, encountered neighborhoods where "the children waved giddily, hoping for chocolate; the women dressed head to toe in black robes stared rigidly at the ground; the old men nodded with hard, empty eyes; and the young men stared back at us callously."³ With civilian

¹ Mark Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the Secret Special Forces War in Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), 164. This narrative describes the sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia during "the Battle for Baghdad" from 2006 through 2007. Katherine Hall and Dale Stahl, *An Argument for Documenting Casualties: Violence Against Iraqi Civilians 2006* (Arlington, VA: Rand Corporation, 2008), 23. The monthly average of Iraqi fatalities went from 77 in 2003, to 688 in 2004, to 1,204 in 2005, to 1,989 in 2006.

² *The Surge*, directed by Jason Killian Meath, Institute for the Study of War, 2009.

³ Matt Gallagher, *Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010), 63. 2-14th Cavalry is part of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

fatalities down seventy percent and attacks on coalition forces at their lowest levels since 2004, the situation paled in comparison to 2006.⁴

Security and stability returned to most Iraqi neighborhoods by 2008. This was a stark contrast from the dark days of 2006 and early 2007 when violence spiraled out of control and hope appeared lost. Iraq during these turbulent days provides a story of pursuit and transformation: pursuit of a vision influenced by a dynamic and complex environment, both strategically and operationally, and transformation through action relative to time, space, and purpose. To capture the essence of this pursuit and transformation, one must come to grips with the story's comprehensive and evolutionary nature. It involves two primary actors, General George Casey, Jr. and General David H. Petraeus, each with a different theoretical approach. In context, these actors faced conditions that both constrained and allowed action, creating a dynamic that influenced how they actually perceived and shaped time, space, and purpose within their sub-plot. The story underlies the significance that factors such as politics, combat power, and adversarial influence, just to name a few, have on military campaign planning and execution, in this case in Iraq from 2004 through 2008.

After a long buildup, United States and United Kingdom forces invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003, under the title Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Within a month Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime was in ruin and out of power. On May 1, 2003, U.S. President, George W. Bush, with a banner stating "Mission Accomplished" in the background, announced from the aircraft carrier, USS Abraham Lincoln, that major combat operations in Iraq were complete.⁵ However, this announcement was premature and history will show that American military operations in Iraq

⁴ John R. Ballard, *From Storm to Freedom: America's Long War with Iraq* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 221.

⁵ George W. Bush, "Remarks by President Bush announcing the end of major combat operations in Iraq Thursday evening from the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln," CBS News, posted May 1, 2003, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/05/01/iraq/main551946.shtml> (accessed December 3, 2011). "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the U.S. and our allies have prevailed. And now our Coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country."

actually ended eight years later on December 15, 2011.⁶ This disparity speaks to a myriad of shortfalls and missteps in post-invasion planning beginning with the months following the invasion. Due to the misguided policies and methodical action of the Coalition Provisional Authority, led by Ambassador Paul Bremer, May 2003 through May 2004 became a lost year.⁷ Despite restoring Iraqi sovereignty in June 2004 and supporting the drafting of an Iraqi constitution, its approval via a national referendum, and the election of a new Iraqi government in 2005, Iraq's internal conflicts only grew stronger and by the beginning of 2006, Iraq was on the verge of civil war due to systematic terrorist attacks by al Qaeda in Iraq and Ba'athist Sunni insurgents combined with sectarian violence fueled by Iranian sponsored militias. Thus, American and coalition forces in Iraq faced the daunting challenge of defeating a lethal insurgency in 2006. The overall commander in Iraq, General Casey, who had replaced Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, struggled to thwart this challenge, electing to stick to his operational approach that emphasized empowering the Iraqis, militarily and politically. Casey's approach had little effect and by the end of 2006, Iraq was in utter chaos.

In January 2007, aiming to reverse the chaos in Iraq, President Bush, "in the boldest stroke of his presidency," ordered sweeping changes in strategy, force size, and leadership in Iraq.⁸ He announced the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, a departure from the *National Strategy for*

⁶ Thom Shanker, Micheal S. Schmidt, and Robert F. Worth, "In Baghdad, Panetta Leads Uneasy Moment of Closure," *The New York Times* New York, December 15, 2011, sec. Middle East, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/16/world/middleeast/panetta-in-baghdad-for-iraq-military-handover-ceremony.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 12, 2012).

⁷ Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 156. Bremer adopted a more methodical approach to forming a new Iraqi Government because he thought it was "necessary to ensure the government enjoyed support from both the population and institutions of civil society." In addition, he directed the policies concerning the de-Baathification of Iraqi society and the dismantling of Iraq's security forces. The conglomeration of these actions contributed to the lost year and fueled an already disparate and antagonistic environment.

⁸ Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2009), 27-28. Prior to January 2007, President Bush, in November and December 2006, "accepted Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's resignation and nominated former Central Intelligence Agency

Victory in Iraq announced only thirteen months previous.⁹ He approved the deployment of five additional Army combat brigades and two Marine combat battalions to Iraq. Coveted by President Bush as the last hope to avert a possible Iraqi sectarian civil war, the so-called surge, as it became known, increased American troop levels by 30,000.¹⁰ To lead this change in strategy, the President chose General Petraeus to replace Casey as Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq.¹¹ Against formidable odds, Petraeus and his fellow commanders developed and implemented a new approach in which they protected the Iraqi population, gained its trust, and ultimately re-seized the initiative from the enemy. By 2008, with relative stability restored within Baghdad and surrounding areas and al Qaeda in Iraq in disarray, the Iraqi Government now had the “breathing room” to strengthen their government and attempt to establish political compromise among all entities in Iraq. Thus, in a year, the chaos that was so dominant spanning 2005 to 2007, was relatively non-existent by 2008.

General Petraeus and the new operational approach drew resounding accolades as the impetus behind the dramatic turnaround. However, when analyzed deeper, did Petraeus deserve such credit? How important was this increase in force or were the conditions just favorable for change? Had Casey set the conditions for Petraeus? While answers to these questions are debatable, history will describe the period in Iraq from 2004 through 2008, overseen

Director Robert Gates to replace him.” Additionally, on December 14, 2006, Lieutenant General Ray Odierno replaced Lieutenant General Pete Chiarelli as the Corps commander in Iraq.

⁹ Ibid., 28. The *New Way Forward in Iraq* focused on securing the Iraqi population first, while the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* focused on building the Iraqi governance and security forces first. A more in-depth definition for each strategy, to include strategic objectives, will follow later in this paper.

¹⁰ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 375. Bush believed that “the surge was our best chance, maybe our last chance, to accomplish our objectives in Iraq.”

¹¹ Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, 29. In addition to Petraeus, Admiral William “Fox” Fallon replaced General John Abizaid at U.S. Central Command, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker replaced Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad in Baghdad. Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign: The U.S. Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2003–January 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2008), 42. Multi-National Forces-Iraq was formed on May 15, 2004 under the re-designation of Combined Joint Task Force-7. Major subordinate commands were Multi-National Corps-Iraq, the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s Gulf Region Division.

operationally under these two generals, as a time of turbulent and fluctuating strategic context.¹² This period provides a backdrop in which to analyze the significance that changes in strategic context have on campaign planning under the purview of two different commands in Iraq.¹³ The commands of Casey and Petraeus provide two excellent case studies demonstrating contrast in operational understanding and visualization based on respective strategic context. This comparison highlights the effect strategic context has in linking tactical actions with strategy, the essence of operational art. The actions both generals took, given the conditions at hand, were concrete and analyzable. This monograph seeks to highlight these conditions and ensuing actions on the part of both commands, ultimately addressing the question: From an operational perspective in Iraq, how significant was the strategic context weighing on the commands of Generals Casey and Petraeus?

Casey and Petraeus are the primary actors within this story, the operational artists.¹⁴ What do Casey and Petraeus do given the context they are dealt? This paper will focus purely on concrete, discernible action, analyzing each commander's operational art. The concept of

¹² Thomas Bruscino, "The Theory of Operational Art and Unified Land Operations" (Draft, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2011), 3. Strategic context "allows operational artists to determine risk, and thus, what is possible in the pursuit of the strategic objective." An evolving understanding of strategic context provides operational planners the medium with which to derive strategic objectives and the logic to sequence appropriate tactical actions. The strategic context, for the purposes of this paper, will consist of two contexts: strategic/political and operational.

¹³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), GL-6. Joint doctrine defines campaign planning as "the process whereby combatant commanders and subordinate joint force commanders translate national or theater strategy into operational concepts through the development of an operation plan for a campaign." A campaign is "a series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space." This paper will use the term "operational planning" interchangeably with campaign planning throughout.

¹⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), 10. While operational art is not associated with a specific echelon of commander in current doctrine, in this paper, Casey and Petraeus are acknowledged as the operational artists because as commanders of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, they are able to best "balance risk and opportunity to create and maintain the conditions necessary to seize, retain, exploit the initiative and gain a position of relative advantage while linking tactical actions to reach a strategic objective." They are the military commander ultimately responsible for tactical actions in Iraq.

operational art continues to evolve since it first entered American military doctrine in 1982.¹⁵ Currently, the Army defines operational art as “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”¹⁶ Time, space, and purpose are relative to strategic context and are always in a state of flux. Thus, it stands to reason that time, space, and purpose appeared much different to Casey and Petraeus. From one command to the other, something fundamentally changed to bring about drastically different results from 2006 to 2007. As literature and media would have it, the much ballyhooed surge received much of the credit. However, this paper will argue that it was about more than just extra “boots” on the ground. It was about how Casey and Petraeus envisioned time, space, and purpose in relation to strategic context. Between the two, there was a change in intellectual construct.

This monograph seeks to illuminate this change by comparing and contrasting the tactical actions under both commanders within the parameters of their unique understanding of time, space, and purpose. In line with current joint and Army doctrine, this paper will use elements of operational design and/or tenets of unified land operations to highlight each commander’s operational art.¹⁷ Through this analysis, differences will surface, allowing the significance of

¹⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-5: Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 2-3. This was the first time the operational level of war appeared in Army doctrine. In the 1986 edition of *Field Manual 100-5: Operations* (page 10), the term operational art replaced operational level.

¹⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 9. In accordance with *ADP 3-0*, “a tactical action is a battle or engagement, employing lethal or nonlethal actions, designed for a specific purpose relative to the enemy, the terrain, friendly forces, or other entity.” Tactical actions can range from an attack to destroy all the way to security force assistance.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1. Defines Army doctrine as “a body of thought on how Army forces operate as an integral part of a joint force.” *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0* is one of three documents that form Army capstone doctrine. “Capstone doctrine establishes the Army’s view of the nature of operations, the fundamentals by which Army forces conduct operations, and the methods by which commanders exercise mission command. Capstone doctrine also serves as the basis for decisions about organization, training, leader development, materiel, Soldiers, and facilities.” 7-9. Tenets of Unified Land Operations are: flexibility, integration, lethality, adaptability, depth, and synchronization. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2001), 245. Defines joint doctrine as “fundamental principles that guide the employment of U.S. military forces in coordinated action toward a common objective.” Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-18 to III-38. The elements of operational design

strategic context from Casey to Petraeus to resonate. The underlying premise being that an accurate and evolving understanding of strategic context exists with those responsible for planning, reflected in tactical action. This paper has the advantage of hindsight and will not pretend to pass judgment on their understanding. Each commander's actions were a product of the options afforded to it by their relative contextual understanding, flawed or not. For the operational artist, this often means fundamentally understanding strategic context and then forming a theoretical approach often in relation to finite time, contested space, and politicized purpose. This dynamic highlights this monograph's thesis: From an operational perspective in Iraq, the significance of the strategic context weighing on the commands of Generals Casey and Petraeus was in the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose in pursuit of the respective strategic objectives.¹⁸

Time

Of all of the factors influencing operational planning, time is one of the most important, often dictating tactical actions. When combined with force movement and the speed of tactical action, "time can considerably increase the freedom of action for the operational commander."¹⁹ A single misguided tactical action often disrupts sequencing or synchronization, and thereby adversely affects the outcome of a major operation or campaign.²⁰ Typically, the operational artist cannot influence those elements of time that are the responsibility of the national-strategic command authority such as political timelines.²¹ However, operationally, by controlling the rate

are: termination, military end state, objectives, effects, center of gravity, decisive points, lines of operations/lines of effort, direct and indirect approach, anticipation, operational reach, culmination, arranging operations, and forces/functions. Arranging operations consists of the factors of simultaneity, depth, timing, and tempo.

¹⁸ The assumption being that each employed operational art methodology in their campaign planning and execution.

¹⁹ Milan N. Vego, "Operational Warfare" (PhD diss., U.S. Naval War College, 2000), 47.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 48.

of tactical action, the operational artist can disrupt an adversary's decision cycle, thereby influencing their actions. Knowing when to conduct certain tactical actions is an art, "requiring a great deal of foresight" from the commander. This is known as timing. When the commander accounts for strategic context, timing affords him the opportunity to operate from a position of relative advantage within the operational environment.²²

From Casey's perspective, time was paramount in shaping tactical action from July 2004 through 2006. Political timelines as outlined by the United Nations and the Bush administration provided the driving impetus behind Multi-National Forces-Iraq's operations. Casey conceptualized time as following a long-term path toward transitioning to the Iraqis. The goal was to stay on this course and if all possible, shorten it by expediting tactical actions. Based on overarching and fixed political milestones, Casey's operational approach faced little deviation during his tenure. The following context will support this point and shed light on how Casey perceived the factor of time.

The strategic context was both pervasive and inescapable in shaping Casey's conception of time. In November 2004, President Bush won re-election. This victory, in conjunction with previous events, such as the March 2004 agreement on the Transitional Administrative Law reached by the Iraqi Governing Council, bolstered the Bush administration's stance toward Iraq.²³ Despite increasing instability in Iraq, the U.S. Department of Defense continued to support a strategy focused on transitioning to a stable Iraqi government secured by a viable Iraqi security force.²⁴ The belief was that "political progress was the path to security and, ultimately, the path

²² Ibid., 54.

²³ Bush, *Decision Points*, 356. The Transitional Administrative Law "called for a return of sovereignty to Iraq in June [2004], followed by elections for a national assembly, the drafting of a constitution, and another round of elections to choose a democratic government." Bush indicates that these political milestones provided a "road map" for strategy during the first three years in Iraq.

²⁴ Ibid., 363. Bush states that General Casey, General Abizaid, and Rumsfeld were "convinced our [U.S.] troop presence created a sense of occupation, which inflamed violence and fueled the insurgency." Based on this logic, U.S. strategy focused on withdrawing forces as the Iraqis stood up.

home.”²⁵ Despite conditions steadily growing worse, the Bush administration held firm to their “stand-up/stand-down” approach so much so that they “launched a major communications effort to explain the then-operative” strategy in late 2005.²⁶

The role that Casey’s superiors played in shaping his perception of time proved significant. Prominent among these individuals was the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, who warned Casey “to resist the temptation to do too much.”²⁷ Additionally, Casey’s past experiences in the U.S. Army reinforced this conservative mentality.²⁸ Rumsfeld’s influence was persuasive and powerful throughout Casey’s tenure, especially early on.²⁹ Strategically, Rumsfeld “made it clear he wasn’t particularly interested in remaking Iraq.”³⁰ Thus, while the President identified Iraq as vital to America’s interest, Rumsfeld’s message carried a less ambitious tone, focusing on quickly transitioning to the Iraqis through accomplishment of political and security force transition milestones.³¹

On January 30, 2005, Iraq held their first general election since the fall of Saddam’s regime. While approximately sixty percent of eligible voters turned out, most Sunnis boycotted,

²⁵ Ibid., 356.

²⁶ Peter D. Feaver, “The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision,” *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 99. The media dubbed Bush’s strategy as “stand-up/stand-down.”

²⁷ David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 169.

²⁸ Ibid. Rumsfeld believed that U.S. officers were often unrealistic in their approach to solving problems. His concern was that “the more the U.S. tried to do for the Iraqis, the less they would do for themselves and the longer U.S. forces would be stuck there.” It was all about resisting this trap, or “attitude” as Casey termed it. Casey fell back on his experiences as a commander in Bosnia in which he realized that “can-do Americans can’t want peace more than the people they are trying to help.” 215. By maintaining realistic goals, Casey believed he was protecting the U.S. Army from another “Vietnam-like quagmire.”

²⁹ Ibid., 171. During his initial assessment upon taking over Multi-National Forces-Iraq, Casey conducted twenty-three phone conversations or video teleconferences with Rumsfeld. These occurred during his first two months in Iraq.

³⁰ Ibid., 169.

³¹ George W. Bush, “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq,” *National Security Council White Paper* (November 2005), 1. Bush placed high priority on achieving success in Iraq. He saw Iraq as the “central front in the global war on terror” with the “fate of the greater Middle East” at stake.

thus, highlighting inherent sectarian dissension.³² The elections also served as an initial barometer indicating Iraqi security force development, overseen by Petraeus, then Commander of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.³³ President Bush summed up American strategy in a June 2005 speech at Fort Bragg, North Carolina: “As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.”³⁴ Again, Casey’s operational approach supported this rhetoric and despite signs of sectarian strife beginning to materialize in 2005, “there was nothing other than head-down pushing toward the operational objectives that had been developed by Casey’s staff the previous summer.”³⁵ Tactical action continued to be tied to timelines surrounding governance and security force transition.

In summary, Casey’s command faced an evolving and complex strategic context from 2004 through 2006. This was how Casey viewed the world and cannot be dismissed. At the end of this view was a new Iraq consisting of a constitutional, representative government with security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order and able to deter terrorists.³⁶ To Casey, this end state appeared achievable if given enough time.³⁷ However, by the end of 2006, Casey’s campaign sputtered producing impatience and consternation within the Bush administration. Although Casey was in command of Iraq for just over two and half years, Casey held firm to his

³² Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 46.

³³ “Special Defense Department Briefing on Iraq Security Forces,” *DefenseLink*, February 4, 2005, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050204-2083.html> in *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 46. Petraeus credited the Iraqi Security Forces with providing security for the elections.

³⁴ John D. Banusiewicz, “As Iraqis Stand Up, We Will Stand Down, Bush Tells Nation,” U.S. Department of Defense, posted June 28, 2005, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=16277> (accessed December 3, 2011). President Bush stated that “the principal task of our military is to find and defeat the terrorists and that is why we are on the offense. And as we pursue the terrorists, our military is helping to train Iraqi security forces so that they can defend their people and fight the enemy on their own.”

³⁵ Ballard, *From Storm to Freedom: America’s Long War with Iraq*, 177.

³⁶ Bush, “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq,” 1.

³⁷ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 247. Casey firmly believed that the “stand-up/stand-down” strategy would work given enough time. In December 2006, during a video teleconference with the President, Casey “argued for continuing with the current strategy. By the summer of 2007, he predicted, the Iraqi Security Forces would be capable of operating with only limited support, allowing him to begin a long-delayed drawdown in American units.”

operational approach, a result of his perception of time relative to a strategic context that was dominant and inescapable, dictating subsequent tactical action.

From General Petraeus' perspective, time was working against him. He conceptualized time as requiring a long-term path toward Iraqi transition, however, in Petraeus' case, time was limited. The goal was to, if all possible, gain more time for Iraqi governance and military transition.³⁸ By 2007, the strategic context was such that, operationally, a sense of urgency dictated time. To overcome this urgency, the President replaced Casey with Petraeus as Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq. From February 2007 to September 2008, this change equated to a fundamentally new operational approach that looked to slow down the "Washington clock" which was "ticking a lot faster than the Baghdad clock."³⁹ The ensuing paragraphs will highlight the contextual foundation behind this new approach.

By the end of 2006, a new operational approach was already in motion affording Petraeus an "operational hedge" against time even before assuming command.⁴⁰ While Casey, still in command, continued to argue for holding the status quo, Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno began to explore other courses of action.⁴¹ In December 2006, having just replaced Lieutenant

³⁸ Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 284. Bush believed that "a heavier presence will buy time for his government," referring to Maliki during a December 2006 planning session with Abizaid.

³⁹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 382. Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 283.

⁴⁰ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 545. Petraeus formally assumed command in mid-February 2007, but dialogue behind the scenes makes it clear that he was in de-facto command two months earlier. On December 12, 2006, six days prior to Robert Gates officially taking over as Secretary of Defense, Rice met with Gates to discuss the way ahead in Iraq. At this meeting, Gates indicated that "he wanted Dave Petraeus to assume the command of the coalition forces in Iraq." Thus, from this point on, Casey was essentially a "lame duck" commander.

⁴¹ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 246-47. In mid-December 2006, during a video teleconference with President Bush, Casey continued to plead his case for continuing with the status quo. Casey believed that the Iraqi Security Forces would be ready to operate autonomously, for the most part, by the summer of 2007, facilitating a U.S. force drawdown. Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 283. Bush pressed Casey "to demonstrate that we're doing something fundamentally different." Casey's recommendations failed to demonstrate change in Bush's eyes. "It was clear to Casey that the president had tuned him out" in

General Peter Chiarelli as Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Odierno, former Commander of the 4th Infantry Division during the early occupation of Iraq, began to lean forward in adjusting the operational approach based on guidance emanating from the White House as well as his own evolved understanding.⁴² Appreciating the ongoing discourse occurring strategically and recognizing his position given the environmental propensity, Odierno began to posture Multi-National Corps-Iraq forces toward an inevitable change in strategy and fundamental shift in mindset. Thus, by the time Petraeus arrived in Baghdad in February 2007, Multi-National Corps-Iraq was prepared to develop and execute a new campaign plan, wasting little time in going forward with tactical action.

In keeping with Clausewitz's dictum that "war is an instrument of policy," political leaders often set the left and right limits for military commanders.⁴³ Sometimes these limits constrain, while other times they allow freedom of action. In taking over in February 2007, Petraeus contemplated the latter. The emergence of sectarian violence in Iraq combined with an increasingly bleak American domestic outlook foreshadowed political urgency within the Bush administration, culminating in Republican defeat in the 2006 U.S. mid-term elections. Although multiple military strategy reviews were ongoing, the loss of congressional control to the Democrats solidified to President Bush that change was both necessary and urgent.⁴⁴ Thus, by

favor of Keane and Kagan. Multi-National Corps-Iraq, "Transition Bridging Strategy, Concept and Background Slides (Dec 06)" (December 2006). Casey directs "shift" in operational approach in December 2006 in an attempt to speed up transition to the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces.

⁴² Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 371. Rice describes Odierno as a "thinker." To his credit, after leading early campaigns in OIF, Odierno "returned from the battlefield between 2004 and 2006 determined to understand why we were not succeeding." Hence, through reflection, Odierno's mindset evolved since his days as 4ID commander. Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 296. Keane was Odierno's conduit in the White House; an advocate for five surge brigades as opposed to Casey's plan of two Army brigades and two Marine battalions.

⁴³ Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 605.

⁴⁴ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 239. President Bush realized by mid-2006 that the current strategy in Iraq was not working. Out of this concern came four military strategy reviews: a White House review led by national security

2007, President Bush desperately coveted a new operational approach.⁴⁵ However, this “desperation” was a “double-edged sword” because while Petraeus was free “to take the war in a completely different direction,” he had limited time to produce results.⁴⁶

While time was a pervading factor early in Petraeus’ campaign, it took on a diminished role as conditions in Iraq improved by the conclusion of 2007 and Congressional tolerance increased. Congressional support significantly influenced planning horizons and continued resourcing. Understanding the disparity between “the clock in Iraq and the one in Washington,” President Bush focused the new Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, domestically, in preparation for a formal Congressional review planned for September 2007.⁴⁷ As domestic pressure lessened and conditions in Iraq improved, an “end in sight” became clearer to Gates and Rice by the fall of 2007.⁴⁸ They envisioned terminating the war through “a framework arrangement with the Iraqis—both a status-of-forces agreement and a political document to govern the relationship.”⁴⁹ This vision was significant in that it provided increased fidelity to planners concerning timelines and served as the catalyst for the eventual

advisor Stephen Hadley, a Pentagon initiative led by General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an Iraq Study Group led by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, and an external report sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, that included retired General Jack Keane, a Petraeus mentor.

⁴⁵ Bush, *Decision Points*, 375. “The surge was our best chance, maybe our last chance, to accomplish our objectives in Iraq.” Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 538. In the fall of 2006, President Bush faced “growing hostility even from Republicans about our effort” in Iraq. Rice described how “it was almost unbearable to watch the pressure on the President to change course in Iraq.”

⁴⁶ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 255.

⁴⁷ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 594-95. Throughout 2007, Gates and Rice held preemptive briefings and individual meetings for Congress concerning the war effort. Their purpose was to offset growing consternation within Congress. Additionally, they also engaged the media in an attempt to change the narrative. In July 2007, the *New York Times* published the first article to acknowledge that the “Iraq war strategy was accomplishing its objectives and the military should be given more time to play it out.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 595.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

status-of-forces agreement and strategic framework agreement finalized in 2008.⁵⁰ Thus, in September 2007, Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, testified to Congress on the state of Iraq. Highlighting an improving security situation, their testimony helped in solidifying increased political tolerance heading into 2008.⁵¹ The “mood in Washington had shifted” in their favor and the “clocks in Baghdad and Washington” appeared closer to being in sync, allowing Crocker and Petraeus to continue, with little deviation, their campaign plan.⁵²

Recognizing that Casey and Petraeus’ notion of time was a derivative of the strategic context that surrounded their specific operational approach, this section will look at their tactical actions given the respective context. The elements of operational design and/or tenets of unified land operations offer helpful conceptual tools to construct how each command incorporated the factor of time within their campaign design and execution.

Overarching political milestones drove tactical action under Casey. In arranging operations, the factors of timing and tempo resounded within Casey’s operational design.⁵³ Just after assuming command in Iraq, Casey expressed optimism concerning the way ahead stating

⁵⁰ Ibid., 694-95. Rice describes how President Bush, “more than anyone else, saw the strategic significance of the agreement.” After much deliberation, a withdrawal timetable was agreed to with all U.S. forces departing by the end of 2011. Rice believed that “the resulting Status of Forces Agreement put the end of the war in sight and left the new U.S. President a firm foundation for a successful conclusion of our presence there.”

⁵¹ David H. Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq* (Washington, DC, 2007), <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Petraeus-Testimony20070910.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2012). Petraeus concluded that “the military objectives of the surge are, in large measure, being met.” He cited statistics that showed a decline in overall weekly attacks, civilian deaths, and ethno-sectarian violence. He attributed these declines to Multi-National Forces-Iraq’s recent actions against Al-Qaeda and Shia extremist, adding that “we have also disrupted Shia militia extremists, capturing the head and numerous other leaders of the Iranian-supported Special Groups, along with a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative supporting Iran’s activities in Iraq.”

⁵² Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 596.

⁵³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-36. Timing allows the joint force to conduct operations at a tempo and point in time that best exploits friendly capabilities and inhibits the adversary. With proper timing, joint forces can dominate the action, remain unpredictable, and operate beyond the adversary’s ability to react. Tempo refers to the pace of operations.

that, “there is a strategic opportunity for success.”⁵⁴ In their initial campaign plan, Casey and then U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, stressed that the best way to capitalize on this “opportunity” was through elections.⁵⁵ As time progressed, the Iraqi Security Force training program garnered more emphasis and by the summer of 2005, Casey believed it was paramount that they increase the number of advisory teams.⁵⁶ Campaign-wise, the focus shifted to both governance and advisory assistance. A concerted effort toward elections and security force training/transition, in addition to isolated offensive operations, became the reality from 2004 through 2006. Key electoral and referendum dates provided the focus for action. For example, the first Iraqi general election, in January 2005, influenced the timing of offensive operations in cities such as An Najaf in August 2004, Samarra in October 2004, and Fallujah in November 2004. In these early actions, American and Iraqi forces conducted combined offensive operations to eliminate insurgent safe havens, enabling the upcoming elections.⁵⁷ These operations also provided an early proving ground in which to evaluate Petraeus’ newly trained Iraqi Security Force units.⁵⁸ As mentioned previously, Casey and Negroponte saw elections and security force assistance as the priority. In lieu of other efforts, they placed considerable resources and money

⁵⁴ Quote from an August 2004 email from Casey to Abizaid in Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 170.

⁵⁵ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 170. “The assumption that fair elections would blunt the insurgency was widely held among senior U.S. officials at the time.” Establishing legitimate Iraqi governance was the way to gain the populace’s support. Casey chose to deviate from classic counterinsurgency logic that prioritizes population security.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 174. Casey emphasized that, “We have two priority efforts—training Iraqi security forces and the elections.” Quote taken from meeting notes compiled on 14 August 2004 in meeting between Casey and his top commanders at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad. 191-92. In June 2005, after some consternation, President Bush approved Casey’s new approach calling for increased numbers of advisory teams.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 171. Casey directed Lieutenant General Thomas Metz, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander, to clear sixteen key cities prior to the January 2005 elections.

⁵⁸ David H. Petraeus, “Battling for Iraq,” *Washington Post*, September 26, 2004. In this op-ed, Petraeus highlighted Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq’s progress: “Today approximately 164,000 Iraqi police and soldiers (of which about 100,000 are trained and equipped) and an additional 74,000 facility protection forces are performing a wide variety of security missions.”

toward enhancing the Iraqi army and police forces.⁵⁹ On January 30, 2005, the Iraqi elections occurred without significant incident. Comforted in this outcome, Casey's operational template appeared set allowing continued focus on Iraqi political progress and security force transition.⁶⁰

However, by mid-2006, in the midst of rising sectarian violence and an intensified sense of urgency from within the Bush administration, time began to work against Casey.

Acknowledging this dynamic, he directed an operational shift, dubbed the "Transition Bridging Strategy," in late 2006. The shift directed acceleration in the transitioning of security back to the Iraqis. His intent emphasized a faster handover "by enhancing transition teams, providing capable enabling functions, and building capacity in the national security ministries."⁶¹ Ultimately, this modified approach, underlying Casey's belief in a scaled down coalition force mission set on the periphery, was "not a fundamental departure from the coalition force strategy" already in existence.⁶² The deviation was in the rate of training and transition actions. To re-establish stability, he directed an increase in the tempo of security force assistance operations combined with a renewed emphasis placed on the Government of Iraq to further its political development.

⁵⁹ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 174. As an example of Multi-National Forces-Iraq's priority of effort, \$2 billion, earmarked for reconstruction projects, instead, went to Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq in August 2004.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 188. On the night of the elections, Casey celebrated with his aide Major Tony Hale. Casey believed the elections were a success and validated their campaign plan, stating, "This will work." Abizaid reinforced this belief the next day. 192-93. Casey focused on enabling further Iraqi political progress in the form of a constitutional referendum in October 2005 and another national election in December 2005. Additionally, in June 2005, after receiving support from President Bush, the Pentagon approved an increase in advisory teams. Casey requested 2,500 officers and non-commissioned officers. The Army filled his request primarily with reservists.

⁶¹ Multi-National Corps-Iraq, "Transition Bridging Strategy, Concept and Background Slides (Dec 06)," December 2006.

⁶² Ibid.

Based on this tempo, Casey believed significant force drawdowns could begin by the spring of 2007.⁶³

General Petraeus recognized that he had limited time to produce results based on the before mentioned strategic context. Any new operational approach had to embrace this dynamic. The goal was to apply focused pressure quickly and continuously in order to increase the window of opportunity for action beyond 2007. In arranging operations, the factors of simultaneity, depth, timing, and tempo were apropos in framing Petraeus' operational design.⁶⁴

On the day that Petraeus assumed command, February 14, 2007, Multi-National Forces-Iraq launched Operation FARDH AL-QANOON (Enforcing the Law). The goal was to secure the population of Baghdad by targeting al Qaeda in Iraq, Sunni insurgents, and Shia extremist elements. For this initial operation, timing was suitable due to planning and resourcing completed by Odierno and his staff prior to Petraeus taking command. Two months later in April 2007, Operation MARNE FORTITUDE I began in Baghdad. Lasting until December 2007, its goal was to promote security in the southern and eastern belts of Baghdad.⁶⁵ These two operations were the stage setters for three corps level operations.⁶⁶ The first of which was Operation PHANTOM THUNDER from June 2007 through August 2007. Seizing the initiative, this offensive, consisting of three division level operations, disrupted al Qaeda in Iraq terrorist bases and

⁶³ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 247. "By the summer of 2007, [Casey] predicted, the Iraqi security forces would be capable of operating with only limited support, allowing him to begin a long-delayed drawdown in American units."

⁶⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-35–III-36. Simultaneity refers to the simultaneous application of military and nonmilitary power against the enemy's key capabilities and sources of strength. Depth seeks to overwhelm the enemy throughout the operational area, creating competing and simultaneous demands on enemy commanders and resources and contributing to the enemy's speedy defeat.

⁶⁵ Dale Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2010), 19. The term "belts" refers to the suburban ring of neighborhoods surrounding Baghdad. See map 2 in Andrade for map depiction.

⁶⁶ Institute for the Study of War, "Operations," Iraq Project: Operations, <http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-project/operations> (accessed December 30, 2011).

networks throughout Iraq.⁶⁷ The second corps level operation was Operation PHANTOM STRIKE from August 2007 through January 2008. Exploiting the initiative, this offensive, consisting of nine division level operations, prevented al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni and Shia insurgent elements from reconstituting forces in Baghdad, its belts, and elsewhere.⁶⁸ The last corps level offensive was Operation PHANTOM PHOENIX, January 2008 through July 2008. Continuing to exploit, this offensive, consisting of four smaller operations, struck at al Qaeda in Iraq elements based in northern Iraq.⁶⁹ In retaining previous gains, Petraeus launched Operation MARNE FORTITUDE II, January 2008 through June 2008, aimed at promoting security and

⁶⁷ Ibid. Operation MARNE TORCH I, June 2007 through July 2007, cleared the areas along the Tigris River southeast of Baghdad. Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER, June 2007 through August 2007, cleared Baqubah and the surrounding areas. And lastly, Operation MARNE AVALANCHE, July 2007 through August 2007, cleared the Highway Eight – Euphrates River corridor south of Baghdad. Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, 114-15. “PHANTOM THUNDER was unusual in the annals of counterinsurgency for its scale and its combination of multiple, complex movements over a large area, all of which focused on essential tasks of counterinsurgency.” Operational art came “in tying multiple, simultaneous, and successive operations together over time.”

⁶⁸ Institute for the Study of War, “Operations,” Iraq Project: Operations, <http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-project/operations> (accessed December 30, 2011). Operation MARNE HUSKY, August 2007 through September 2007, targeted Sunni insurgents in the Tigris River Valley south of Baghdad. Operation LIGHTNING HAMMER I, August 2007 through September 2007, cleared the Diyala River valley, northeast of Baqubah. Operation MARNE TORCH II, September 2007 through October 2007, targeted Sunni insurgents and al Qaeda in Iraq in the Arab Jabour region southeast of Baghdad. Operation LIGHTNING HAMMER II, September 2007 through November 2007, targeted al Qaeda in Iraq networks throughout Salah ad Din, Diyala, Ninewah, and Tamim provinces. Operation MARNE ANVIL, October 2007 through November 2007, targeted Shia extremist east of Baghdad. Operation IRON HAMMER, in November 2007, targeted al Qaeda in Iraq throughout Salah ad Din, Diyala, Ninewah, and Tamim provinces. Operation IRON REAPER, November 2007 through December 2007, targeted al Qaeda in Iraq in the Tigris River Valley and Za’ab Triangle southwest of Kirkuk. Operation MARNE COURAGEOUS, November 2007 through December 2007, targeted al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents in the Euphrates River Valley southwest of Baghdad. Operation MARNE ROUNDUP, December 2007 through December 2007, targeted al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents in Iskandariyah south of Baghdad.

⁶⁹ Ibid. First, Operation MARNE THUNDERBOLT, January 2008 through February 2008, pushed further south in the Arab Jabour region southeast of Baghdad. Second, Operation IRON HARVEST, January 2008 through July 2008, focused on al Qaeda in Iraq in northern Iraq. Third, Operation MARNE GRAND SLAM, February 2008 through March 2008, aimed to terminally disable the al Qaeda in Iraq network in the area of Salman Pak southeast of Baghdad. Lastly, Operation MARNE RUGGED, March 2008 through April 2008, spearheaded by the Iraqi Security Forces with Coalition assistance, defeated the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq in the Tigris River valley.

development in the southern and eastern Baghdad belts.⁷⁰ Not to be out done, the Iraqis launched their own operation from March 2008 through May 2008. While Operation KNIGHT'S CHARGE took Petraeus by surprise, it demonstrated Maliki's resolve and set the conditions for future operations against Shia militias.⁷¹ Lastly, in July 2008, the coalition conducted Operation IRON PURSUIT which consisted of four smaller operations focused on clearing Diyala Province, located northeast of Baghdad.⁷²

Thus, from 2007 through 2008, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted a plethora of combined and joint operations, ranging from division to corps level, based on the counterinsurgency approach of "clear-hold-build."⁷³ Operations often spanned weeks and months at a time with simultaneity as the norm. During this period, success was continually reinforced through successive and nested tactical actions. Being able to maintain tempo and depth was

⁷⁰ Ibid. Operation MARNE FORTITUDE II consisted of two operations. The first, Operation MARNE PILEDRIVER, April 2008 through May 2008, was a coalition operation focusing on capacity building in the southwest of Baghdad. The second, Operation MARNE DAUNTLESS, May 2008 through June 2008, was an operation to build capacity and defeat extremist in the eastern belt of Baghdad, in the area of Jisr Diyala and Nahrwan.

⁷¹ Ibid. First, Operation PEACE, April 2008 through May 2008, consisted of coalition and Iraqi Security Forces clearing Sadr City of Shia militias. Next, Operation LION'S ROAR, occurring during May 2008, targeted the al Qaeda in Iraq network and other Sunni insurgent groups in Mosul and Ninawa Province. Then, Operation MOTHER OF TWO SPRINGS, May 2008 through February 2009, was a continuation of LION'S ROAR, designed to clear Mosul of criminal terrorist gangs. Lastly, Operation PROMISES OF PEACE, June 2008 through June 2008, was an Iraqi offensive in Maysan Province focused on the Jaysh al-Mahdi.

⁷² Ibid. Operation EAGLE PURSUIT, July 2008 through January 2009, was a joint operation between coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in Salah-al-Din Province designed to push insurgents out of Diyala Province into the Uzaym River valley. Operation BASTOGNE PURSUIT, July 2008 through January 2009, was a subset of Operation IRON PURSUIT designed to further deny insurgents a safe haven in Diyala Province. Operation SABER PURSUIT, July 2008 through December 2008, was an operation in eastern Diyala Province which cleared villages outside of Diyala's major population centers. Lastly, Operation GLAD TIDINGS OF BENEVOLENCE, August 2008 through August 2008, was an Iraqi operation carried out in tandem with Operation IRON PURSUIT designed to pursue insurgents in rural areas of Diyala Province.

⁷³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006) 5-18. "Clear, hold, build" is a counterinsurgency approach with the following objectives: (1) create a secure physical and psychological environment, (2) establish firm government control of the populace and area, (3) gain the populace's support. 1-1. Counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.

critical in disrupting the enemy's timing throughout the campaign.⁷⁴ The combination of simultaneity, depth, timing, and tempo helped to quickly achieve results that Petraeus needed in time for his Congressional testimony in September 2007. By understanding the importance of the "Washington clock," tactical actions were effectively synchronized with appropriate lethality to achieve desired effects and ultimately, increased political tolerance for further action into 2008. This additional time was invaluable in allowing the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, and his government the opportunity to gain maturity and legitimacy with Operation KNIGHT'S CHARGE as a case in point.⁷⁵ After all, the overarching premise of Petraeus' campaign was about giving the Iraqi government "breathing room."

Thus, Casey and Petraeus saw the factor of time through different prisms. Their operational approaches and resulting tactical actions were a product of their strategic context. Just how significant is the point of this paper and will follow next. By contrasting their operational design given this relationship, strategic context's significance relative to time influencing Iraq, from 2004 through 2008, becomes much clearer.

The obvious difference between the campaigns of Casey and Petraeus was in their prioritization of operations based on time. Casey prioritized political progress and security force training and transition. By increasing the tempo in these efforts, he believed a quicker drawdown was possible. Conversely, Petraeus emphasized security efforts first. His approach, based on population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine, called for high-tempo "clear, hold, build"

⁷⁴ Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, 146. "As operations progressed, commanders were attuned to opportunities not only to advance current clearing operations but also to lay the preconditions for long-term stability in the area."

⁷⁵ Bush, *Decision Points*, 387-88. Iraqi Security Forces attacked Shia extremist in Basra on March 25, 2008. Maliki personally traveled south to oversee the operation. Bush saw the offensive as "a defining moment." While the operation "was far from textbook," it established legitimacy for Maliki and his government. Timing was impeccable, occurring just before Petraeus and Crocker's second Congressional testimony in April 2008.

operations aimed at quickly improving security, allowing Iraqi governance the opportunity to grow.

In highlighting strategic context, the Pentagon's emphasis on training and transition during Casey's command was undeniable. Casey also fell back on past lessons learned during his time in Bosnia.⁷⁶ This combined with an overwhelming emphasis on force protection led to American forces conducting less offensive operations and more security force assistance. Despite violence steadily escalating from 2004 to 2006, Casey felt confident in the efficacy of his approach due to Presidential and Pentagon backing. "Iraqization" drove the timing of tactical actions from 2004 through 2006.⁷⁷ Although a slight shift toward "clear, hold, build" focused operations began in mid-2006, they were ineffective due to lack of sufficient troops.⁷⁸ However, any increase in forces was a moot point because Iraqi governmental legitimacy drove security in Casey's approach. By the end of 2006, strategic support from the Bush administration diminished greatly due to domestic pressure. The strategic context was such that the President was "desperate" for a drastically new approach in Iraq. This angst drove the timing of tactical actions in 2007. With additional surge forces and Iraqi security elements, Petraeus was able to conduct effective "clear, hold, build" counterinsurgency operations that maintained lasting security. The timing of these operations was critical due to the fragile nature of the Government of Iraq and the overall mission in the spring of 2007.

⁷⁶ Donald P. Wright, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, March 14, 2012. Interview was in reference to Casey's Operational Approach in Iraq from 2004 through 2006. Wright indicated that Casey's experiences in Bosnia influenced his approach. Casey sought to avoid the Iraqis becoming dependent on the U.S. for military support.

⁷⁷ Benjamin Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force* (London: Routledge, 2008), 132. "The Pentagon's solution was 'Iraqization': a greater emphasis on training indigenous security forces, it was hoped, would permit Iraqis to shoulder a steadily increasing burden of responsibility for their own security.

⁷⁸ Ibid. The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* called for a threefold military approach based on the counterinsurgency approach, "clear, hold, build."

Space

Space is the second aspect that helps discriminate between the two approaches. Tactical actions based on counterinsurgency principles were far from the norm during 2004 and 2005. One exception took place in the northern Iraqi city of Tal Afar in the summer of 2005. This operation became the perceived solution for how to control space. The problem was that Tal Afar was just one space among a thousand in Iraq. In this paper, space is both physical and conceptual. Physical space encompasses the land and tangible geography. Political, ethnic, or religious conditions considerably influence the use of physical space. Conceptual space is closely related to time and consist of political, diplomatic, social, or economic space. This space is intangible, but necessary to further governmental growth and legitimacy. Physical and conceptual space presents opportunity and/or liability for the operational artist. Despite technology, space “still counts and cannot be wished away as some argue.”⁷⁹ The perception and reality of space evolved from 2004 to 2007 in Iraq. For the operational artists, the challenge was arranging tactical actions to account for this evolution. The following section will describe this evolution and Casey and Petraeus’ attempt to account for it within their campaign design and execution.

From Casey’s perspective, space was more conceptual than physical. The focus was primarily on providing the Iraqis space to grow politically and militarily. From 2004 through 2006, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted sporadic offensive operations designed to shape conditions for political milestones. Coalition forces rarely held geographic space other than their expansive forward operating bases. In fact, the goal was to continually relinquish space to Iraqi governmental and security force oversight. This approach to the factor of space was in line with the respective strategic context which follows next.

⁷⁹ Vego, “Operational Warfare,” 33-42. Vego defines the factor space in relation to operational warfare.

On July 1, 2004, Casey assumed command of Multi-National Forces-Iraq from Lieutenant General Sanchez. Along with Ambassador Negroponte replacing Paul Bremer, these changes signaled a growing sense of urgency on behalf of the Bush administration concerning progress in the war.⁸⁰ In August 2004, Multi-National Forces-Iraq published a new campaign plan that “characterized the coalition military effort in Iraq as full spectrum counterinsurgency operations.”⁸¹ Despite this guidance, coalition operations continued to take on more of a search-and-destroy nature with force protection considerations paramount. Monthly American troop losses in Iraq numbered fifty-four in July, sixty-six in August, eighty in September, sixty-four in October, and 137 in November 2004.⁸² The growing threat came primarily from a combination of what President Bush termed “rejectionists, Saddamists, and terrorists.”⁸³ Additionally, the Shiites posed a competing threat. The Shia threat, initially garnering less appreciation, mainly concerned militias led by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. In the fall of 2004, President Bush received national intelligence reports that acknowledged these elements and the strengthening insurgency.⁸⁴ Despite these reports, Multi-National Forces-Iraq viewed the threat monolithically, referring to these elements as anti-Iraqi forces, or “AIF.” This term encompassed internal as well as external threats. Former Saddamists, augmented by al-Qaeda and affiliated groups such as al-Qaeda in Iraq, appeared to be the primary threat fomenting instability.⁸⁵ Thus, Multi-National Forces-Iraq’s

⁸⁰ Negroponte became the first ambassador to Iraq, leading U.S. Mission-Iraq.

⁸¹ Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 42.

⁸² Bush, *Decision Points*, 357.

⁸³ George W. Bush, “Iraq War Strategy: Speech at the U.S. Naval Academy,” The White House, posted November 30, 2005, <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/11.30.05.html> (accessed December 5, 2011).

⁸⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 408. In December 2004, President Bush received two official reports evaluating Iraq. The first one was from the Central Intelligence Agency and the second one was from a senior U.S. military intelligence expert on Iraq. Both reports highlighted the growing threat from insurgents.

⁸⁵ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 164. In July 2004 shortly after taking over Multi-National Forces-Iraq, Casey met with Colonel Derek Harvey, an intelligence officer who spoke Arabic and possessed a degree in Islamic political

view of the threat combined with an ingrained search-and-destroy mentality drove operations throughout 2004, with the focus being on killing anti-Iraqi forces and not on controlling space.

Additionally, Iraq was just one of many areas of concern for the Bush administration. Simultaneous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq placed a heavy burden on the American military. In addition, possible global hotspots such as Iran and the Korean Peninsula required additional planning considerations. Taken in whole, Rumsfeld, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command, tightly managed the deployment of combat power. The belief that increased operational tempo from two wars could possibly “break” the Army was prevalent within the Pentagon. Any significant increase in forces was met with conservative opposition.⁸⁶ The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, with its emphasis on a light “footprint” and quick transition to Iraqi government and security forces, catered to these concerns. This conservative approach attracted staunch support from Rumsfeld as well as Casey while Abizaid expressed some concern by mid-2006.⁸⁷ Under these concerns, space continued to be subservient to time within operational planning and execution.

thought. Casey solicited his situational estimate. Harvey believed that former Saddamists were running the insurgency supported by foreign jihadists. Harvey emphasized killing the former Saddamists while also winning over the Sunni moderates.

⁸⁶ Bush, *Decision Points*, 376. In a meeting with President Bush at the Pentagon on December 13, 2006, the Joint Chiefs of Staff “questioned whether the demands of a surge would leave us unprepared for other contingencies, such as a flare-up on the Korean Peninsula.” Additionally, they worried about “break[ing] the military.”

⁸⁷ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 247. When pressed by President Bush in late 2006, Casey held out support for the existing strategy. Understanding that the situation was dire, Abizaid took a neutral stance, providing the President a cost-benefit analysis of options. 241. In email correspondence between Abizaid and Casey in 2006, Abizaid warns that “the dynamic needs to change” in Iraq. Abizaid all but resists ordering his friend to do something different. 245. However, while believing that U.S. advisory teams needed bolstering, Abizaid, in line with Casey, never wavered in resisting a surge in troops.

Overall U.S. Army doctrine during this time was based on the concept of full spectrum operations outlined in *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, dated June 2001.⁸⁸ In addition, counterinsurgency doctrine was outlined in *Field Manual 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations*, dated October 2004.⁸⁹ While these documents portrayed a more holistic operational approach, the reality was that an enemy-centered approach remained prevalent. Tactically, commanders and soldiers adapted as best they could to an increasingly complex environment. Conversely, the insurgency adapted and began shifting more towards the Iraqi population. Insurgents displaced throughout Iraq to cities such as Tal Afar, Baghdad, Mosul, Baqubah, and Ar Ramadi. However, in their attempt to control Anbar Province, al Qaeda in Iraq began to alienate local Sunni tribes. This rift exposed al Qaeda in Iraq and presented Multi-National Forces-Iraq operational opportunity.⁹⁰ By the end of 2005 with domestic opinion declining, Pentagon assessments described Multi-National Forces-Iraq's position in Iraq as untenable at best.⁹¹ To address these concerns, the White House issued the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* on November 30, 2005, and General Peter Schoomaker, then Army Chief of Staff, ordered Petraeus to take over as Combined Arms Center Commander at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁹² In addition, with far less hype, the Department of Defense released *Directive 3000.05* two days prior

⁸⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-0: Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2001), 1-16. When conducting full spectrum operations, commanders combine and sequence offensive, defensive, stability, and support operations to accomplish the mission.

⁸⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2004). *FM 3-07.22* was an initial attempt by the U.S. Army to establish counterinsurgency doctrine. The manual was inadequately staffed and lacked substance compared to *FM 3-24*.

⁹⁰ In late 2006, the Sunni "Awakening" took hold in Anbar Province. In this movement, local Sunni tribes united with U.S. forces to counter al Qaeda in Iraq. The "Awakening" was not fully embraced operationally within Multi-National Forces-Iraq until 2007. The "Awakening" served as the model for the later Sons of Iraq movement during the surge in 2007.

⁹¹ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The War in Iraq: An Interim Assessment* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, November 2005), 4.

⁹² Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 23. General Schoomaker wanted Petraeus to "shake it up" in reference to changing the way the Army thought about counterinsurgency doctrine. Petraeus served as Combined Arms Center commander from October 2005 to February 2007.

to the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, which placed stability operations on par with major combat operations.⁹³ Thus, by the end of 2005, American military doctrine gradually evolved “to lay a greater emphasis on restraint, population control, and cultural and political sensitivity,” but continued to stress minimizing casualties.⁹⁴

On December 15, 2005, in the immediate shadow of *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*’s announcement, Prime Minister Maliki, a Shiite, was elected to lead the new Iraqi government. Entering 2006, President Bush reiterated that “the mission is to continue to hand over more and more territory and more and more responsibility to Iraqi forces” coinciding with American force reductions numbering seventeen brigades to fifteen brigades, lowering troop strength to approximately 130,000.⁹⁵ While Iraq’s future seemed bright, turmoil and tension, somewhat dormant and restrained previously, soon emerged. On February 22, 2006, insurgents, affiliated with al Qaeda in Iraq, bombed the Golden Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, one of the most sacred sites in Shia Islam. After the bombing, sectarian violence escalated throughout Iraq as Shiites and Sunnis, the minority, commenced to kill one another. Al Qaeda in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian militant Islamist, proved to be the major catalyst to the instability. Al Qaeda in Iraq’s primary operational goal was to make the occupation so “untenable and uneconomical” that the Coalition would have no option but to consider withdrawal.⁹⁶ Between

⁹³ Department of Defense, “Directive 3000.05: Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations” (November 28, 2005).

⁹⁴ Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force*, 132.

⁹⁵ CNN, “Bush: Iraqi forces will take more control in 2006, President predicts U.S. force levels will drop,” posted January 4, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/01/04/bush.iraq/index.html> (accessed December 30, 2011). John J. McGrath, *Boots on the Ground: Troop Density in Contingency Operations*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 16 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 137. To provide perspective, 184,500 was the force size in Iraq in January 2005.

⁹⁶ Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 178. The insurgent’s secondary operational goal hoped that casualty rates would impact domestic affairs.

February and July 2006, the Department of Defense estimated that sectarian violence was responsible for approximately 4,800 civilian deaths.⁹⁷

As Iraq spiraled out of control in late 2005 and early 2006, Petraeus, as directed, led an effort to overhaul the American military's counterinsurgency doctrine. By the end of 2006, the Army published *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, based on classical counterinsurgency theory that emphasized a population-centric operational approach.⁹⁸ The manual solidified counterinsurgency principles throughout the Army and Marines, many already in existence tactically since late 2003.⁹⁹ While Petraeus and his team revamped counterinsurgency doctrine, operations continued in Iraq. General Peter Chiarelli, former 1st Cavalry Division Commander, assumed command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq while Abizaid and Casey continued as commanders of Central Command and Multi-National Forces-Iraq, respectively.¹⁰⁰ On the political side, Zalmay Khalilzad continued as U.S. Ambassador, having taken over from Negroponte in 2005. The execution of Saddam Hussein ended the year, but signaled trouble ahead.¹⁰¹ As sectarian violence escalated into 2007, physical space was in direct contention between Sunni and Shia. Additionally, conceptual space, in terms of the Iraqi populace's confidence in their physical security, was exploited by extremist entities such as al Qaeda in Iraq.

⁹⁷ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, November 2006), 24.

⁹⁸ The first draft of *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* circulated throughout the Army in June 2006.

⁹⁹ In 2005, General Casey established a counterinsurgency academy at Camp Taji, Iraq, after witnessing tactical transgressions in 2004. Colonel H.R. McMaster's handling of Tal Afar in 2005 highlighted unit adaptiveness as well as the fact that historical precedence existed concerning counterinsurgency doctrine.

¹⁰⁰ General Chiarelli co-authored article published in July 2005 that emphasized the importance of full spectrum operations. When he assumed command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, his experience in Iraq included commanding 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad in 2005.

¹⁰¹ A video showing Hussein's execution appeared publicly. On the video, Hussein's executioners shout in support of al-Sadr. This incident was an inadvertent indication of sectarian strife to come.

From Petraeus' perspective, space was physical and conceptual, and had to drive any new operational approach in Iraq. To help facilitate this new approach, President Bush, following a strategic review by the National Security Council, announced the *New Way Forward in Iraq* on January 10, 2007. He approved the deployment of five additional Army combat brigades, two Marine combat battalions, and increased Department of State assistance. In reorienting strategy, the President embraced population-centric counterinsurgency. Resembling the previous strategy, the President envisioned victory as being "a unified democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror," acknowledging that this end state required a long term relationship.¹⁰² The new strategy stated eight strategic objectives.¹⁰³ To achieve these objectives, there were four different "key elements of the new approach." These key elements were security, political, economic, and regional with both the Iraqis and the Coalition assuming responsibility for objectives within each element. Identified in the National Security Council review, seven "major strategic shifts" provided added guidance concerning the way ahead. Population security was the primary mission. This would enable political and economic progress. Iraqis would take the lead with Multi-National Forces-Iraq in support. In the spirit of the Anbar Awakening, the new approach encouraged the countering of violent extremist through the support of moderates seen as being reconcilable. Lastly, the National Security

¹⁰² National Security Council, "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review (Summary Briefing Slides)," (Washington, DC: United States Government, 2006).

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8. The eight objectives were: 1) defeat Al-Qaeda and its supporters and ensure that no terrorist safe haven exists in Iraq, 2) support Iraqi efforts to quell sectarian violence in Baghdad and regain control over the capital, 3) ensure the territorial integrity of Iraq and counter/limit destructive Iranian and Syrian activity in Iraq, 4) help safeguard democracy in Iraq by encouraging strong democratic institutions impartially serving all Iraqis, 5) foster the conditions for Iraqi national reconciliation, but with the Iraqi Government in the lead, 6) continue to strengthen Iraqi Security Forces and accelerate the transition of security responsibility to the Iraqi Government, 7) encourage an expanding Iraqi economy including by helping Iraq maintain and expand its export of oil to support Iraqi development, and 8) promote support for Iraq from its neighbors, the region, and the international community.

Council directed increased political and economic development outside Baghdad. A military surge would also coincide with a civilian surge as well, demonstrating unified action.¹⁰⁴

To ensure progress toward this new way forward, the Bush administration maintained diplomatic pressure on Prime Minister Maliki and his government in the form of shuttle diplomacy and legislative mandates. Through several one-on-one meetings and daily telephone engagements with Maliki and other prominent officials, the Bush administration slowly garnered diplomatic consensus, highlighted in two main demands: reconciliation as well as unrestricted military operations against all entities in Iraq regardless of ethnicity.¹⁰⁵ This consensus, absent during Casey's time, was a point of emphasis and consternation within the Bush administration.¹⁰⁶ So much so, that Secretary Rice warned both Maliki and Sunni leaders that, "If this situation doesn't improve, in six months you'll all be swinging from lampposts."¹⁰⁷ This diplomatic pressure was pivotal in evolving Maliki's narrative. President Bush, after meeting with Maliki in late 2006, "believed we could count on his support," thus facilitating a true deviation

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁵ Bush, *Decision Points*, 366. In June 2006, Bush secretly slipped out of a National Security Council meeting at Camp David and flew to Baghdad to meet with Maliki in the Green Zone. This was the first ever joint national security meeting between the U.S. and Iraq. 373-74. On November 29, 2006, Bush would meet Maliki in Amman, Jordan, to ensure Government of Iraq resolve in defeating Shia extremist, a contentious issue. At this meeting, Maliki unveiled his "ambitious proposal to retake Baghdad with Iraqi forces." Clearly, Maliki "recognized the problem of sectarian violence and was showing a willingness to lead" regardless of ethnicity. 374. At the meeting in Jordan, Bush "decided to test his [Maliki] commitment by raising the prospect of a surge." In return for the additional U.S. forces, Maliki would "need to give me [Bush] certain assurances." These assurances included the following: (1) commitment of more Iraqi forces, (2) no political interference in joint operations, (3) interdiction of Shia militias to include Sadr's army, (4) and as security improved, "progress on political reconciliation among Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds." Maliki agreed, giving Bush consensus to go forward with in formulating strategy.

¹⁰⁶ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 515. After returning from a fall 2006 trip in which she met with Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish leaders within the Government of Iraq, Rice conveyed her frustration and disappointment to President Bush. Rice emphasized that: "No one wants to act on behalf of Iraq—it's all about each of them and their sectarian and personal agendas." She went on to stress to the President that "Life in Iraq isn't even approaching normal, and it isn't going to until the security situation improves."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 513. Rice gave this "lamppost" warning in two separate meetings in the fall of 2006.

from the past in terms of strategy and operational approach.¹⁰⁸ Maliki's support, helped along by the Bush administration's diplomatic insistence, served as an operational enabler. In planning, freedom of maneuver was once again a consideration heading into 2007, allowing Multi-National Forces-Iraq the opportunity to better influence physical and conceptual space.¹⁰⁹

In addition to guidance from higher, Multi-National Corps-Iraq began to alter its understanding of the operational environment. Events, such as the Anbar Awakening, the capture of a map depicting al Qaeda in Iraq's scheme of maneuver, and sectarian violence, offered operational opportunity heading into 2007. First, as a primer, the Anbar Awakening influenced the rise of the Concerned Local Citizens movement, also known as the Sons of Iraq, within Baghdad in 2007.¹¹⁰ Second, the captured map in December 2006 was instrumental in the rise of the "Baghdad Belts" concept. Lastly, due to sectarian cleansing during 2006, Baghdad demographics reflected "virtually no mixed [Sunni and Shiite] enclaves left."¹¹¹ By 2007, the Shiite purged most Sunni from areas of Baghdad, triggering "fault lines."¹¹² In conglomeration, these events significantly altered how Petraeus viewed space in 2007. Embracing these developments, Petraeus departed from his predecessors, laying out "his strategy in terms that even a soldier fresh out of basic training could grasp."¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Bush, *Decision Points*, 375.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 378. Maliki, in an Iraqi national address on January 6, 2007, stressed that "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of sectarian or political affiliation."

¹¹⁰ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 257. These movements supported Petraeus' "push" for Iraqi reconciliation. "Petraeus was determined to find and exploit similar fissures" as the Anbar Awakening.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. David H. Petraeus, "Letter to Multi-National Forces-Iraq, March 15, 2007," March 15, 2007, Commander's MNF-I Archive, http://www.centcom.mil/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1239&pop=1&page=0&lang=en (accessed December 21, 2011). Petraeus expressed his guidance and thoughts through multiple memorandums and letters to Multi-National Forces-Iraq personnel as well as to the Iraqi people.

Strengthened and cultivated during his months away from Iraq, that included in-depth collaboration and dialog concerning past and present doctrine, Petraeus, although cautious, but confident, assumed command of Iraq armed with a new operational approach based on population centric counterinsurgency. Tactically, aided by newly published *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* and experience from multiple deployments to Iraq, Army and Marine units were in an advantageous position to execute Petraeus' vision. The new approach called for units to not only clear, but also hold ground. The priority was to protect the Iraqi people. By achieving security of the populace, the other lines of effort, such as governance, would follow suit. In a break from the past, units would operate out of small outposts scattered throughout Baghdad, as opposed to expansive forward operating bases. Regaining control of Baghdad was paramount. To facilitate this approach, President Bush "decided to send five brigades to Baghdad, plus two additional Marine battalions to Anbar Province."¹¹⁴ From February through June 2007, these additional forces flowed into Iraq. This period became known as the surge and supplied the means to control space.

In keeping with a whole of government approach, the surge also included a civilian influx as well.¹¹⁵ Energized by a new found civilian-military rapport, this influx garnered priority of effort from Rice and the U.S. State Department.¹¹⁶ Fully backed by Rice, Provincial Reconstruction Teams reported directly to the military unit in their assigned area of operations.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Bush, *Decision Points*, 377.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 381. Bush emphasized that "the heart of the civilian surge was doubling the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams." Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 557. In conjunction with the increase in Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Rice hired about three hundred civilians to conduct reconstruction tasks. 560. In line with the *New Way Forward in Iraq's* emphasis on gaining regional support, the civilian surge pushed increased diplomacy.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 540-41. Rice "could barely contain [her] joy" when Bush hinted at possibly replacing Rumsfeld. Additionally, the appointment of Petraeus reinforced her "faith in a new start." 545. The Gates and Petraeus appointments rejuvenated Rice concerning the way ahead in Iraq. If this was not enough, she also held a connection with Odierno, who previously served as her Joint Staff liaison.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 557. Understanding their place on the battlefield, Rice's directed Provincial Reconstruction Teams to report to brigade commanders.

Operationally, Rice chose Crocker to lead this effort. Serving as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq from March 2007 to February 2009, Crocker combined with Petraeus to forge a “highly effective civil-military team,” atypical from their predecessors.¹¹⁸

However, not to be out done, a concerted effort to achieve regional support concerning the way ahead in Iraq emerged in 2006 and continued into 2007.¹¹⁹ This on-going peripheral diplomatic effort reinforced the before mentioned civilian surge within Iraq. Rice conducted multiple trips throughout the Middle East. Meeting with the likes of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Rice achieved widespread consensus from her “Persian Gulf counterparts” concerning the surge.¹²⁰ While it was important to secure the backing of countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, it was equally important to ensure Syria, Turkey, and Iran understood American resolve concerning Iraq and its borders.¹²¹ If any new operational approach was to be successful, any outside contribution to the insurgency had to be preempted or countered.¹²²

While the Bush administration solidified regional support concerning a possible strategy change heading into 2007, it pondered a lack of support from other nations within the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 695. Rice attributed the turnaround in Iraq from 2006 to 2008 to the “extraordinary efforts” of Petraeus and Crocker. She thought so highly of their efforts that she awarded them her highest honor, the Secretary’s Distinguished Service Award. Bush, *Decision Points*, 381. President Bush highlighted the working relationship between Petraeus and Crocker, describing it as “seamless.”

¹¹⁹ National Security Council, “Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review (Summary Briefing Slides).”

¹²⁰ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 549. It is important to acknowledge why Rice’s “Persian Gulf counterparts were as supportive as Congress had been dismissive.” The answer lied in interest. Middle Eastern leaders saw chaos in Iraq leading to “enhanced Iranian influence in the region.” Rice held separate meetings with individual nations as well as group meetings with entities such as Gulf Cooperation Council.

¹²¹ Ibid., 550. The Iraqis requested that all its neighbors, to include Iran, be involved in dialog. Hence, an Iraqi-led conference involving all neighbors, to include Iran and Syria, was held in March 2007 in Baghdad. Rice commented that she had little faith that Iran and Syria would provide any substance.

¹²² Ibid., 550, 562. While diplomatic communication remained open, the U.S. attempted to counter any external influence in Iraq through negative media exposure, military direct action, United Nation approved sanctions, and subversive diplomatic programs. For example, in 2006, Rice requested \$75 million in funding to support democracy and cultural diplomacy programs in Iran.

international community. As long-time support from Great Britain dwindled and others, such as Spain and Italy, withdrew forces in 2006, many areas within Iraq received diminished focus.¹²³ Operationally, this lack of influence provided opportunity for all entities, both foreign and domestic. With the British force drawdown in February 2007, the southern city of Basra faced this dynamic with Shia militias, supported by foreign elements from Iran, operating with relative impunity.¹²⁴ Given an increasing Iranian influx in southern Iraq, any future operational plan needed to eventually address this spatial vacuum.

By the end of 2007, the security situation was relatively stable in the areas touched by Multi-National Forces-Iraq's "clear-control-retain" operations, providing opportunity for Iraqi political legitimization and further military action.¹²⁵ In February 2008, the Iraqi government successfully passed three laws, an important milestone in establishing the government as a legitimate source of power. Despite this progress, the Iraqi government was slow to embrace reconciliation, a much talked about Bush administration demand. However, in the face of this pressure, Maliki directed the Iraqi Security Forces to secure Basra in March 2008, a welcomed surprise to the Coalition. By September 2008, relative stability reigned from Mosul to Basra as the conditions were set for an operational transition.

The operational artist must "consider the entire space in which a major operation or campaign will be conducted."¹²⁶ Strategy provides the ways and means which allow the operational artist to plan and execute tactical actions in this space. In the case of Casey and Petraeus, perception and understanding of space changed drastically from one perspective to the

¹²³ Ibid., 560. Rice addresses the diplomatic vacuum left by Spain, Italy, and Great Britain. Spain withdrew after a new leftist government won election while Italy withdrew in the face of diminished domestic support. In February 2007, Great Britain decreased its forces from 7,100 to 5,500 soldiers.

¹²⁴ Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History*, 159-95. Kagan termed it as "Iran's proxy war in Iraq," devoting an entire chapter to this theme.

¹²⁵ "MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus, 8 February 2007" in Ricks, *The Gamble*, 368-69.

¹²⁶ Vego, "Operational Warfare," 33.

other over time. Tactical action under Casey focused on dominating conceptual space with regards to political legitimacy while under Petraeus the focus was on physical space with regards to geographical legitimacy. Strategic context contributed to this dynamic, demanding respect. The elements of operational design and/or tenets of unified land operations provide useful conceptual tools to analyze how each command incorporated space within their campaign design and execution. This analysis follows next.

On January 30, 2005, eight million Iraqis voted in the first truly democratic elections in the nation's history. Coming almost two years after the invasion, Multi-National Forces-Iraq was a key facilitator to this action. In the months leading up the elections, Multi-National Forces-Iraq "had set the proper conditions for the elections by destroying insurgent safe havens and suppressing the insurgent network overall."¹²⁷ "Suppressing" was the key word since Multi-National Forces-Iraq lacked the manpower and resources to completely stop the insurgency.¹²⁸ The reality was that "no one expect[ed] the insurgency to disappear, but the hope would be to keep a lid on it, limiting its reach and intensity."¹²⁹ To do this, Multi-National Forces-Iraq focused predominately on three cities—An Najaf, Samarra, and Fallujah. These three cities, located south, north, and west, respectively in relation to Baghdad, were decisive points in setting the conditions for the January 2005 elections.¹³⁰ In An Najaf in August 2004, American and coalition forces battled al-Sadr's Mahdi Army through integration of multiple lines of effort.¹³¹ By employing a "combination of combat power, Iraqi Security Force participation, and integrated

¹²⁷ Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 589.

¹²⁸ Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008*, 8.

¹²⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 434.

¹³⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-26. "A decisive point is a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows a commander to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contributes materially to achieving success."

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, III-28. "A line of effort links multiple tasks and missions using the logic of purpose—cause and effect—to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions."

reconstruction operations,” Multi-National Forces-Iraq was able to neutralize al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army prior to the elections.¹³² The An Najaf operation, in terms of synchronizing lethal and non-lethal means against enemy elements within an urban area, “became the core of the coalition approach in dealing with other cities in Iraq where Sunni insurgents had gained sway and threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the Interim Iraqi Government and the upcoming elections.”¹³³ It is also gave Casey hope that a force reduction may be possible by early 2005 after the elections.¹³⁴

In the wake of An Najaf, Casey reiterated to his commanders that the two priority efforts were training Iraqi Security Forces and the elections.¹³⁵ While considerable resources went toward these efforts, combat offensives, designed to shape these two efforts, continued in earnest. In Samarra and Fallujah, Multi-National Forces-Iraq displayed overwhelming lethality in clearing Sunni insurgents from each city.¹³⁶ After clearing, security responsibility fell to the Iraqi government and security forces under coalition force supervision. While these offensives cleared physical space and accomplished Casey’s objective of protecting the electoral timeline and fostering further Iraqi security force development, they also had unattended effects. Lethality and lack of depth inherent in these operations provided the enemy an opportunity to control conceptual space in these areas and beyond.¹³⁷ Reconstruction and government outreach efforts, which help in securing conceptual space, took a “back seat” to governance and security force

¹³² Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 43.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 174. The Iraqi forces performed admirably in An Najaf. In a note to Abizaid, Casey wrote that he “didn’t expect such a key success so early.” He also believed that “Muqtada Sadr gave the interim government its first real test and he lost.” This perceived success gave him “hope” that a troop reduction was imminent.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 44.

¹³⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 7. Lethality is the capacity for physical destruction fundamental to all other military capabilities and the most basic building block for military operations.

training/transition. While the Iraqi government remained the center of gravity, offensive operations decimated infrastructure and lack of resourcing contributed to unemployment leading Major General Chiarelli, whose division was responsible for Baghdad, to write, “If there is nothing else done other than kill bad guys and train others to kill bad guys, the only thing accomplished is moving more people from the fence to the insurgent category—there remains no opportunity to grow the supporter base.”¹³⁸

Thus, heading into 2005, conceptual space remained “up for grabs.” Campaign priorities remained linked to political milestones and security force development. Tactical actions focused on setting the conditions for a constitutional referendum scheduled for October 2005. Additionally, by November 2005, the Iraqi Security Forces numbered over 200,000, a fifty percent increase from the previous summer.¹³⁹ While Casey’s campaign continued in this direction, insurgent elements shifted focus to targeting the Iraqi populace in lieu of American and coalition forces. Concurrently, as the Iraqi Security Forces steadily progressed and took over security, Multi-National Forces-Iraq forces began to pull back to forward operating bases, thus, seceding physical space. While the average Iraqi questioned American commitment, insurgents exploited this narrative to their advantage.¹⁴⁰ While there were minor glimpses of units attempting to reverse this narrative, such as with 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment’s actions in Tal Afar in October 2005, it was far from the norm and outside the parameters of Casey’s campaign

¹³⁸ Peter W. Chiarelli and Patrick R. Michaelis, “Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations,” *Military Review* (July–August 2005): 9. Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 174-75. Chiarelli focused his efforts on reconstruction in Baghdad. Work projects employing 18,000 people such as in Sadr City were the norm within Chiarelli’s more balanced full spectrum approach. He believed that poor infrastructure combined with unemployment were the primary drivers of instability. Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 178. “At the operational level, the center of gravity was the Iraqi Government, more specifically the amount of legitimacy and responsibility it held.”

¹³⁹ McGrath, *Boots on the Ground: Troop Density in Contingency Operations*, 130. The 200,000 includes Iraqi police and army.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Mansoor. *The Art of Brigade Command in Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: Marine Corps University, 2009), 3.

objectives overall.¹⁴¹ Thus, by the end of 2005, with Multi-National Forces-Iraq's campaign lacking operational reach and depth, insurgents controlled both physical and conceptual space in many areas throughout Iraq.¹⁴²

As operations progressed into 2006, Casey searched for ways to counter the growing insurgency. Multi-National Forces-Iraq continued to conduct precision strikes against high value targets while also increasing pressure on insurgents in Baghdad. In the face of rising sectarian violence, Baghdad became a decisive point for Casey.¹⁴³ With Iraqis in the lead, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted Operation SCALES OF JUSTICE and Operations TOGETHER FORWARD I and II in the spring and summer of 2006. Employing the "clear-hold-build" approach "that had once succeeded in Tal Afar and Mosul," the operations proved ineffective overall, failing to secure Baghdad. Despite a slight increase in American troops, the operations lacked operational reach and depth.¹⁴⁴ American forces, after conducting operations, returned to forward operating bases while the Iraqi Security Forces, overseen by American advisory teams, transitioned into the cleared urban areas. This was in keeping with the overall campaign objective of pushing Iraqi forces into the fight. By December 2006, Multi-National Forces-Iraq reinforced this approach with its "Transition Bridging Strategy."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 201. Colonel McMaster was frustrated by what he perceived as a lack of commitment to winning the war from within the Pentagon. He knew that quickly handing the fight over to the Iraqis was flawed at best.

¹⁴² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-33. "Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities."

¹⁴³ Bush, *Decision Points*, 366. In a meeting with Bush in June 2006, Casey indicated that "80 percent of the sectarian violence occurred within thirty miles of Baghdad. Controlling the capital was vital to calming the rest of the country."

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 367. Bush saw "contradiction" in the planning of Operation TOGETHER FORWARD. He questioned whether Casey had enough troops to "clear, hold, build" given the overall strategy of wanting to "reduce our footprint."

¹⁴⁵ "Transition Bridging Strategy: Concept and Background Slides (Dec 06)" in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, Appendix B. This new approach accelerated transition to Iraqi security forces and continued to emphasize reduced footprint with U.S. forces operating primarily from forward operating bases.

Thus, from its inception in the summer of 2004 to the beginning of 2007, Multi-National Forces-Iraq's campaign plan held steady to its underlying logic: governance and security transition were the keys to campaign termination.¹⁴⁶ Isolated and sporadic offensive operations, that disrupted al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents, served as shaping operations to ensure political milestone achievement. In the haste to achieve force reductions and campaign termination, Casey ultimately traded physical and conceptual space for time.

By 2007, most Iraqis believed American forces lacked staying power and commitment especially within urban areas. To destroy this narrative, a campaign plan that valued arrangement of tactical actions in space was essential. Upon taking over Multi-National Forces-Iraq in February 2007, General Petraeus, with the help of his corps commander, Lieutenant General Odierno, immediately went to work in reshaping both physical and conceptual space. Key tasks within their campaign plan were three-fold: secure the Iraqi people, interdict accelerants of Baghdad sectarian violence, and neutralize Sunni and Shia extremists.¹⁴⁷ To accomplish these tasks, control of physical space was paramount. Population-centric counterinsurgency theory, in line with *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, became the overall operational approach. Achieving operational reach, depth, simultaneity, integration, adaptation, and synchronization, Multi-National Forces-Iraq was able to conduct a widespread and comprehensive “clear, hold, build” approach centered on Baghdad, shaped by peripheral operations in the Baghdad belts, Anbar Province, Diyala Province, Mosul, and Basra.¹⁴⁸ The following will describe how Multi-National Forces-Iraq accomplished this feat.

¹⁴⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-18. Termination is the conclusion of a joint operation once pre-designated conditions, termination criteria, are met.

¹⁴⁷ “MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus 8 February 2007” in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, Appendix C.

¹⁴⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 7-9. “Integration involves efforts to exercise inform and influence activities with joint, interagency, and multinational partners as well as efforts to conform Army capabilities and plans to the larger concept.” Adaptability involves being able to change according to the situation. This change may

With the goal of a stable Iraq that was peaceful, united, representative, and secure, Multi-National Forces-Iraq went forward in 2007 with a campaign plan based on “protecting” Baghdad, seen as the decisive operation. Within the “operational framework,” tasks such as defeat, disrupt, exploit, and transition provided the focus for shaping operations.¹⁴⁹ Adhering to the “clear, hold, build” approach, Operation FARDH AL-QANOON, also known as the Baghdad Security Plan, featured a mixture of joint security stations, sectarian compartmentalization, and integration of irregular security forces.¹⁵⁰ The joint security stations, which included both American and Iraqi forces living and operating in close proximity to each other, provided operational reach, depth, adaptation, and integration.¹⁵¹ By displacing from expansive forward operating bases to small outpost strategically scattered throughout Baghdad, Multi-National Forces-Iraq was able to gain increased access into neighborhoods as Iraqi security improved. The joint security stations contested both conceptual and physical space throughout Baghdad. By “entrenching” themselves within neighborhoods, Multi-National Forces-Iraq forces established new relationships with the local population, providing enhanced depth. By partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces at the

include “adjusting the balance of lethal and nonlethal actions necessary to achieve a position of relative advantage and set conditions for conflict resolution with an area of operations.” “Synchronization is the arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time.”

¹⁴⁹ “MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus 8 February 2007” in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 360. Slide entitled “MNC-I Operational Framework” depicts tactical tasks on a map of Iraq.

¹⁵⁰ Richard B. Johnson, “The Biggest Stick: The Employment of Artillery Units in Counterinsurgency” (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 193.

¹⁵¹ Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008*, 16. Multi-National Forces-Iraq divided Baghdad into nine zones, with American and Iraqi forces “working side by side to clear each section of sectarian militias so that reconstruction projects could resume.” Joint security stations were the “crucial element” to enable this effort. Kimberly Kagan, *Enforcing the Law: The Baghdad Security Plan Begins* (Washington, DC: The Institute for the Study of War and WeeklyStandard.com, 2007), <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/enforcing-law-baghdad-security-plan-begins> (accessed December 21, 2011), 6. Kagan’s report displays a map of the nine Baghdad districts within her synopsis of Operation FARDH AL-QANOON.

outposts, Multi-National Forces-Iraq achieved integration which provided reach and additionally, legitimacy. With over seventy joint security stations spread throughout Baghdad, Multi-National Forces-Iraq achieved unparalleled operational reach and depth. Coinciding with the outposts, sectarian neighborhood compartmentalization, through the use of concrete barrier walls and checkpoints, allowed coalition forces enhanced control of their space.¹⁵² In most cases, inspired by the Sunni Awakening, local irregular security forces manned the checkpoints while also providing security over their respective neighborhoods. These elements, which became known as the Sons of Iraq or Concerned Local Citizens, provided increased manpower, enhancing Multi-National Forces-Iraq's overall reach and depth. To their credit, American commanders and troops displayed remarkable adaptation in embracing partnered joint security stations and the incorporation of local irregular forces.

In order to exploit the opportunity presented by the joint security stations and the Awakening movement, Multi-National Forces-Iraq incorporated an additional five surge brigade combat teams within Baghdad and surrounding areas. To achieve better command and control, Multi-National Corps-Iraq divided Baghdad between two division commands, Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Multi-National Division-Central. This re-task organization and shifting of division spatial responsibilities, combined with the incorporation of additional brigade combat team elements, facilitated increased focus in previously neglected areas within Baghdad and its belts. This adaption in command and control provided the campaign further reach and depth. Operation MARNE FORTITUDE I, in conjunction with Operation FARDH AL-QANOON,

¹⁵² Tim Weiner, "Walling Off Your Enemies: The Long View," *New York Times*, April 29, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/29/weekinreview/29wein.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed April 21, 2012). Compartmentalization consisted of "walling off neighborhoods" in order "to control population and to provide security." Petraeus referred to these neighborhoods as "gated communities."

spanning April to December 2007, reaped the benefits of this new battle space geometry in establishing security in the southern and eastern belts of Baghdad.¹⁵³

With Baghdad as the decisive operation, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted simultaneous shaping operations outside the capital. These operations, which included three separate corps level operations, prevented insurgent forces from influencing operations in Baghdad. The first, Operation PHANTOM THUNDER, from June 2007 through August 2007, disrupted al Qaeda in Iraq and Shia insurgent basing and lines of communication along the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys.¹⁵⁴ The second, Operation PHANTOM STRIKE, from August 2007 through January 2008, exploited previous success in preventing al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni and Shia insurgent elements from reconstituting forces in Baghdad, its belts, and elsewhere.¹⁵⁵ The third corps level offensive, Operation PHANTOM PHOENIX spanning January 2008 through July 2008, continued to exploit previous success by disrupting al Qaeda in Iraq elements in northern Iraq, Baghdad's belts, and the Tigris River valley.¹⁵⁶ These three corps level offensives, in addition to Operation MARNE FORTITUDE II and Operation IRON PURSUIT, provided Multi-National Forces-Iraq operational reach stretching beyond Baghdad into its belts and further east, west, and north.¹⁵⁷ While the Provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, and Nineveh, spanning west and north of Baghdad, received significant focus from predominately conventional campaign offensives against al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents in 2007, southeastern Iraq was a different story. Petraeus employed primarily American and British special operations forces,

¹⁵³ Institute for the Study of War, "Operations," Iraq Project: Operations, <http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-project/operations> (accessed December 30, 2011). Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008*, 102.

¹⁵⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Operations," Iraq Project: Operations.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3D Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008*, 308. MARNE FORTITUDE II sought to maintain security gains achieved earlier and "create irreversible momentum that enables a transition of security operations and economic development to the Iraqi people."

codenamed Task Force 17, “to step up raids against those acting as Iran’s hitmen in Iraq.”¹⁵⁸ With U.S. Army Special Forces teams, known as Operational Detachment Alphas, embedded in the Iraqi National Intelligence Service’s special forces and the Iraqi army’s commando brigade, Petraeus was able to extend operational reach and depth to provinces such as Dhi Ghar and Maysan.¹⁵⁹ Petraeus’ employment of Task Force 17 and Iraqi special operations forces, within his campaign plan, avoided culmination and ensured an Iraqi “face” dominated the narrative, exploiting the opportunity to strengthen Iraqi governmental legitimacy.¹⁶⁰

The synchronization and simultaneity of both conventional and unconventional tactical actions allowed Multi-National Forces-Iraq to advantageously reshape physical and conceptual space throughout Iraq. By reducing insurgent freedom of maneuver, lines of communication, and basing, security within Baghdad and surrounding areas reemerged, providing Multi-National Forces-Iraq a position of relative strategic advantage by spring 2008. However, to achieve the campaign objective of a democratic, unified, and peaceful Iraq, this advantage required further exploitation by Maliki and his government. This came in the form of unexpected military action. From March 2008 through May 2008, the Iraqi Security Forces, in conjunction with American and coalition military advisors, executed Operation KNIGHT’S CHARGE against Shia insurgent elements in Basra. While the operation took Petraeus and Crocker by surprise, it demonstrated Maliki’s resolve and “demonstrated that the Shia militia in Basra could be beaten,” setting the

¹⁵⁸ Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the Secret Special Forces War in Iraq*, 228. Task Force 17 relied heavily on the efforts of U.S. Army Special Forces with one senior U.S. official commenting: “It is hardly recognized how the entire situation in the south depended upon a very small number of U.S. special forces soldiers.”

¹⁵⁹ These provinces, along with the city of Basra, were decisive points in disrupting Iranian influence in the form of weapons, training, and manpower helping to fuel Shia insurgents and militias in the south and Baghdad and its belts. Maysan borders Iran while Dhi Ghar borders Maysan to the west.

¹⁶⁰ Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the Secret Special Forces War in Iraq*, 228. “Acting as mentors to Iraqi SOF, the use of these teams also ensured that operations in Shia militant strongholds had an Iraqi face to them—something of great symbolic importance in the U.S. relationship with Iraq’s government.”

conditions for future operations.¹⁶¹ This action, though not foreseen within its campaign plan, provided Multi-National Forces-Iraq an opportunity for combined action against Shia militias in other areas, such as Sadr City in eastern Baghdad.¹⁶² By the spring of 2008, given Multi-National Forces-Iraq's operations the previous year, the actions of Maliki and the Iraqi Security Forces provided even more "breathing space, an opportunity for political resolutions or indeed for the Coalition's withdrawal."¹⁶³

Thus, under Petraeus, Multi-National Forces-Iraq's campaign plan encompassed tactical actions indicative of a true "clear, hold, build" counterinsurgency approach. With that said, securing the populace required acute determination and emphasis on "holding" both physical and conceptual space. Operationally, by achieving reach, depth, tempo, integration, simultaneity, and synchronization, Petraeus exploited the arrangement of tactical actions in space, gaining Multi-National Forces-Iraq a position of relative strategic advantage by the fall of 2008.

The campaigns of Casey and Petraeus were a product of their strategic context, resulting in a contrast in operational art. While there were a myriad of contextual factors bearing weight on each command's tactical employment in space, this paper will emphasize just three: strategic guidance, the Sunni Awakening, and Shia dominance. Factors such as these influenced tactical action in space, providing opportunity and/or limitations. By contrasting each commander's operational design given this dynamic, strategic context's significance relative to space within Iraq, from 2004 through 2008, will resonate, complimenting actions in time, just discussed.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 269.

¹⁶² David E. Johnson, M. Wade Markel, and Brian Shannon, *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, Arroyo Center, 2011) 4. Maliki's directed actions against Jaish al-Mahdi in Basra placed pressure on Jaish al-Mahdi elements in control of Sadr City. In response, Jaish al-Mahdi forces, in late March 2008, "attacked coalition and government targets with rocket and mortar fire." This response prompted Maliki to finally allow tactical action against the criminal militias in Sadr City, later known as the Battle of Sadr City.

¹⁶³ Urban. *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the Secret Special Forces War in Iraq*, 278.

First, strategic guidance from the Bush administration and the Pentagon heavily shaped Multi-National Forces-Iraq's tactical disposition within Iraq. The two strategies, the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* and the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, shaped ways and means for both commands. With this in mind, Casey focused on increasing conceptual space through achievement of political milestones. Tactical actions under Casey were cognizant of this focus. This led to sporadic clearing operations such as in the cities of Najaf, Fallujah, Ramadi, Tal Afar, and Samarra.¹⁶⁴ These operations were temporary measures providing conceptual space for elections and growth of Iraqi security forces. This approach was in line with the means available in terms of military and civilian manpower. Heavily influenced by the Bush administration, Rumsfeld, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Abizaid, Casey focused his campaign on quickly "standing up" the Iraqi government and security forces. Conversely, Petraeus, in congruence with the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, focused on securing the populace first through "clear, hold, build." The new strategy provided him the means in terms of the surge. Additionally, due to domestic opinion, the President was willing to accept more perceived risk. This dynamic in conjunction with the surge provided Petraeus opportunity to clear and hold space. Leaving the "protection" of their forward operating bases, Multi-National Forces-Iraq operated from a myriad of austere outposts within Baghdad and other cities. These joint security stations and combat outposts were critical to controlling physical and conceptual space. Additionally, just as important, the Sunni Awakening reinforced this effort.

The Sunni Awakening presented Multi-National Forces-Iraq opportunity to exploit both conceptual and physical space. While this movement, born in Anbar Province, was in its infancy by 2006, it remained operationally dormant due to Casey's campaign focus on a quick transition

¹⁶⁴ Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 170. By the end of the summer of 2005, U.S. commanders no longer talked of clearing places like Anbar. Instead, they had to settle for holding a handful of cities and towns and disrupting insurgent activity elsewhere with periodic strikes.

of security to the Iraqi Security Forces.¹⁶⁵ However, by 2007, thanks to the tactical efforts of units in Anbar Province, such as Colonel Sean McFarland's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, and the emergence of population-centric counterinsurgency in U.S. Army doctrine, the movement was ripe for exploitation.¹⁶⁶ Within Multi-National Forces-Iraq's new campaign plan reinforced by his guidance to units, Petraeus emphasized "midlevel commanders seizing the initiative and making peace with their former enemies."¹⁶⁷ In the shadow of the Sunni Awakening in Anbar, the Concerned Local Citizens or Sons of Iraq movement in Baghdad, implemented under the auspices of Petraeus' overall vision, provided Multi-National Forces-Iraq increased operational depth and reach, complimenting their employment of joint security stations and combat outpost.¹⁶⁸ To their credit, Petraeus and his subordinate commanders, such as Odierno, embraced this opportunity, an adaptation from past campaign plans. Given this evolution, the difference between commands was that by 2007, the Sunni Awakening presented operational effects due to a change in strategy and willingness to accept greater risk, a consequence of increased political urgency from the Bush administration.¹⁶⁹ While Petraeus exploited this seam within the Sunni insurgency, he also had another sectarian dynamic to contend with, the Shia.

The Shia presented an evolving dilemma for Generals Casey and Petraeus. With the Shia comprising sixty percent of the Iraqi population, they occupied considerable physical and

¹⁶⁵ Hoping to establish security in Baghdad while increasing Iraqi Security Force legitimacy, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted Operations TOGETHER FORWARD I and II in 2006.

¹⁶⁶ Michael E. Silverman, *Awakening Victory: How Iraqi Tribes and American Troops Reclaimed Al Anbar and Defeated Al Qaeda in Iraq* (Philadelphia and Newbury: Casemate, 2011).

¹⁶⁷ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star: four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 264-65. To his credit, Petraeus embraced the Anbar Awakening. Upon taking over Multi-National Forces-Iraq, he created the Force Security Engagement Cell, designed "to seek out reconcilable enemies."

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 276. Sunni reconciliation within Baghdad was known as Sons of Iraq. By the fall of 2007, almost 70,000 sons of Iraq were on U.S. payroll. In this movement, local Sunnis provided security for their respective neighborhoods in Baghdad, similar to neighborhood watch commonly seen in the U.S.

¹⁶⁹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 383-84. President Bush made a surprise visit to Anbar in September 2007, demonstrating the strategic importance of the Awakening. The visit symbolized the strategic effects Multi-National Forces-Iraq's tactical actions were having by the fall of 2006.

conceptual space, predominately in southeastern Iraq and portions of Baghdad.¹⁷⁰ Gaining control of this space was a constant challenge for Multi-National Forces-Iraq from 2004 through 2008. The rise of Shia militias, al Sadr's influence within the Iraqi government, Iran's subversive influence, and Prime Minister Maliki's maturation provided opportunity or constraint in operational design and execution from Casey to Petraeus. During his command, Casey's ability to gain operational reach and depth within Shia areas faced ongoing atrophy: from operations in Najaf in 2004 to being restricted from action against Shia militia in Sadr City and Basra by 2006. Conversely, Petraeus faced an opposite dynamic driven by Maliki's eventual willingness to conduct operations against Shia in both Sadr City and Basra, increased leverage against Iran's covert cross border operations, and al Sadr's declared cease fire. Within his campaign plan, these events allowed Petraeus to tactically influence needed space. When captured holistically, Casey seceded conceptual and physical space to Shia by 2006, while Petraeus exploited the same space by 2008, an indication of strategic context's significance in Iraq during this period.

Purpose

Purpose is the "why" behind action. From a holistic military perspective, according to *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*, "the purpose of military operations is to achieve the military objectives that support attainment of the overall political goals of the conflict. This frequently involves the destruction of the enemy armed forces' capabilities and their will to fight."¹⁷¹ Purpose compliments the factors of time and space in providing the unifying logic for planning actions and resources toward a common objective. Common purpose enables increased unity of action and effort facilitating a more effective and efficient linkage between tactics and strategy. In seeking this dynamic, the operational artist must account for strategic context. This

¹⁷⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. "CIA World Fact Book: Iraq," posted February 12, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html> (accessed March 12, 2012).

¹⁷¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), A-1.

accountability presents opportunity for action and in doing so shapes campaign design and execution.

From Casey's perspective, the purpose was to enable the transfer of governance to the Iraqi Government in accordance with the United Nations' vision for Iraq.¹⁷² On August 5, 2004, Multi-National Forces-Iraq issued a new campaign plan with the mission statement stating:

"In partnership with the Iraqi Government, Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducts full spectrum counter-insurgency operations to isolate and neutralize former regime extremist and foreign terrorists, and organizes, trains, and equips Iraqi security forces in order to create a security environment that permits the completion of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 process on schedule."¹⁷³

This statement underscored the importance of adhering to the United Nations timeline.

Throughout Casey's first year and half of command, this adherence drove operations. However, by 2006, with Iraq on the brink of sectarian civil war, Casey's command issued a new campaign plan that emphasized enabling the accelerated transition of security to the Iraqi Security Forces.¹⁷⁴

Thus, Multi-National Forces-Iraq's purpose now focused primarily on Iraqi security forces as opposed to governance. To better understand this shift in purpose, this paper will highlight

¹⁷² Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 177.

¹⁷³ Multi-National Forces-Iraq, *MNF-I Framework OPOD Rev 01 Nov 05 Link Index*, 2005 in Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 177. United Nations Security Council. *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546*, June 8, 2004, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8117.doc.htm> (accessed April 21, 2012). United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 directed "a comprehensive resolution on Iraq, which endorsed the formation of the interim government and the holding of democratic elections by January 2005, welcomed the end of occupation by 30 June, and determined the status of the multinational force and its relationship with the Iraqi Government, as well as the role of the United Nations in the political transition."

¹⁷⁴ "Transition Bridging Strategy: Concept and Background Slides (Dec 06)" in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 348. Multi-National Forces-Iraq issued a new campaign plan on June 9, 2006, followed by a Strategic Directive in December 2006, directing an accelerated transition of Iraqi security.

strategic context affecting Casey's tenure with the goal of shedding light on Casey's perception of purpose.

In 2005, the Bush administration faced mounting criticism concerning strategy in Iraq and their response to Hurricane Katrina. In both cases, it looked as though the U.S. government was inept concerning conditions on the ground both foreign and domestic.¹⁷⁵ Seeking to show competency, the White House announced the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.¹⁷⁶ The President envisioned victory in Iraq with the end state being a "peaceful, united, stable, and secure [Iraq], well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism."¹⁷⁷ The political end state included a "new Iraq with a constitutional, representative government that respects civil rights" while the military end state called for "security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order and keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven for terrorists."¹⁷⁸ The strategy stated eight strategic objectives.¹⁷⁹ To accomplish these objectives, the strategy outlined a threefold military approach based on the counterinsurgency approach of "clear, hold, build."¹⁸⁰ In summary, the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* finally affirmed, publicly, American strategy in Iraq, almost three years into the conflict. It focused on

¹⁷⁵ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Feaver, "The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision," *International Security*, 100. The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, in conjunction with five presidential speeches and bipartisan outreach, was aimed at enhancing the public's understanding of the strategy in Iraq. By doing this, the White House believed it could gain time strategically.

¹⁷⁷ Bush, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 25-26. These objectives were: 1) defeat the terrorists and neutralize the insurgency, 2) transition Iraq to security self-reliance, 3) help Iraqis form a national compact for democratic government, 4) help Iraq build government capacity and provide essential services, 5) help Iraq strengthen its economy, 6) help Iraq strengthen the rule of law and promote civil rights, 7) increase international support for Iraq, and 8) strengthen public understanding of coalition efforts and public isolation of insurgents.

¹⁸⁰ "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" in Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force*, 132. The threefold military approach: 1) Help the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi government regain territory from the enemy (clear); 2) Keep and consolidate the influence of the Iraqi government afterwards (hold); 3) Establish new local institutions that advance civil society and the rule of law in areas formerly under enemy influence and control (build).

transitioning to the Iraqis through democratic due-process in conjunction with a smaller coalition footprint.¹⁸¹ Heavily backed by Rumsfeld, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Abizaid, the strategy re-calibrated Casey's logic, driving Multi-National Forces-Iraq to issue a new campaign plan in June 2006.¹⁸²

To enable a transition to the Government of Iraq, it stood to reason that all efforts, military and civilian, needed to be in unison. Despite Rumsfeld's powerful personality, policy in Iraq went beyond just the military. It also involved political and diplomatic maneuvering by the Department of State. Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, was foremost in influencing political progress in Iraq. With political progress underscoring purpose within strategy, unity and synergy between military and civilian efforts was critical.¹⁸³ However, at the highest levels, this dynamic never came to fruition during Casey's command. Tension between Rice and the Pentagon, to include Casey, belayed any progress from happening on both fronts. Both sides blamed each other with Rice and Casey clashing multiple times.¹⁸⁴ Given this turbulence, any operational approach would be less than comprehensive, struggling to achieve a unity of purpose.

In a speech at the United States Naval Academy on the same day as the release of the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, President Bush emphasized the ends and ways, previously outlined, and proudly highlighted progress in Iraq.¹⁸⁵ Rumsfeld, Abizaid, and Casey supported

¹⁸¹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 356.

¹⁸² Kevin P. Marsh, "The Intersection of War and Politics: The Iraq War Troop Surge and Bureaucratic Politics," *Armed Forces & Society* (August 4, 2011): 7-9.

¹⁸³ Bush, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," 8.

¹⁸⁴ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 370-73. Rice describes her relations with Casey and the Pentagon. Putting it into perspective, Rice relates how her "conversations with the Iraqis were better than [her] interactions with General George Casey." She goes on to describe her frustration "with the Pentagon's attitude toward Iraq." Rumsfeld and Casey resented Rice's comments concerning military doctrine in Iraq. They believed the State Department needed to stay out of military matters.

¹⁸⁵ George W. Bush, "Iraq War Strategy: Speech at the U.S. Naval Academy." Bush boasted how "Our coalition has handed over roughly 90 square miles of Baghdad province to ISF. Iraqi battalions have taken over responsibility for areas in south-central Iraq, sectors of southeast Iraq, sectors of western Iraq, and sectors of north-central Iraq." He also described the transfer of forward operating bases to Iraqi control.

this strategy and were “convinced our troop presence created a sense of occupation, which inflamed violence and fueled the insurgency.”¹⁸⁶ The belief that “political progress was the path to security and ultimately, the path home” would be tested heading into 2006.¹⁸⁷ As 2005 came to a close, a strategic review again seemed plausible, however, none occurred. Soon, conditions would drastically change, jeopardizing the above premise.

By mid-2006, operationally, Multi-National Forces-Iraq faced a crisis in theory. A Marine Corps intelligence report, dated August 17, 2006, from al-Anbar Province assessed that “Multi-National Forces and Iraqi Security Forces [were] no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in al-Anbar.”¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*’s two key enablers, political and security progress, “froze up.”¹⁸⁹ Sectarian violence combined with Iraqi political stalemate fueled doubt within the Bush administration concerning Casey’s campaign plan. Feeling the pressure, President Bush ordered a strategic reassessment and began deliberations in the spring of 2006 with his national security team as well as outside sources such as retired General Jack Keane.¹⁹⁰ The result was a new strategy, the *New Way Forward in Iraq*.

¹⁸⁶ Bush, *Decision Points*, 363.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 356.

¹⁸⁸ I MEF G-2, Colonel Devlin, “State of the Insurgency in al-Anbar Intelligence Report”, 17 August 2006 in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 339-43.

¹⁸⁹ Feaver, “The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision,” *International Security*, 100-01. Feaver draws an analogy between pistons in car and *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*’s political and security tracks. He highlights how these “pistons” have frozen up. Politically, he highlights the lack of political progress since the December 2005 Iraqi elections. In terms of security, he focuses on the Samarra Mosque bombing and ensuing rise in sectarian violence in the shadow of an inept handover to the Iraqi Security Forces.

¹⁹⁰ Bush, *Decision Points*, 363-64, 385. Bush held Keane in high regard, garnering his “valuable advice during the decision-making process” leading up to the surge. Keane was a proponent of the surge and Petraeus. Despite being retired, Keane’s advice held the President’s “ear.” Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 279-81. On December 11, 2006, Keane, one of five outside experts, took part in a decision brief to Bush, Cheney, and Stephen Hadley, Bush’s National Security Advisor. In his pitch, Keane advocated for population-centric counterinsurgency and a surge in military and civilian forces. He saw Baghdad as key terrain, highlighting Sunni/Shia mixed neighborhoods. Additionally, he recommended ‘not be[ing] distracted by Sadr City’ because “an all-out military operation in Sadr City would potentially unite the fragmented Shia militia of up to 70,000.” Based on timing, Sadr

While the new strategy altered the operational approach to securing the Iraqi populace, the purpose held steady, focused on enabling Iraqi governmental development and eventual transition.

While the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, at least on paper, advocated a new strategic narrative, President Bush reinforced his determination to bring about noticeable change in Iraq by making several key personnel changes in late 2006 and early 2007. While the futility of Operations TOGETHER FORWARD I and II reinforced the President's desire for a change in strategy, the U.S. mid-term elections highlighted to the President that any change needed added emphasis.¹⁹¹ This emphasis came in the form of "fresh eyes on Iraq."¹⁹²

Demonstrating his resolve, President Bush replaced his long-time confidant, Secretary Rumsfeld, in November 2006, and his commander in Iraq, General Casey, in February 2007. To replace Rumsfeld, Bush chose former Central Intelligence Agency Director, Robert Gates.¹⁹³ To replace Casey, Gates chose Petraeus after conducting his own review and upon recommendation from Bush. The Gates appointment proved significant in forging a new unified relationship between the Pentagon and the State Department, a departure from the policy "turf-wars"

City, in 2007, represented a possible culmination point, operationally. After the meeting, Keane and Frederick Kagan briefed Cheney further. Kagan was a former West Point professor and "expert on ground warfare who was a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank." Both Keane and Kagan combined efforts to develop and advocate what would eventually become the new strategy and operational approach in Iraq. Their plan was "the first detailed presentation Cheney had seen of how a surge of additional forces might work." Keane and Kagan, in conjunction with the 2006 Republican mid-term election defeat, were instrumental in influencing Bush's Iraq policy change in 2007.

¹⁹¹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 371. After Operation TOGETHER FORWARD II yielded little results in way of security in Baghdad from August through November 2006, President Bush "decided a change in strategy was needed." For this change in strategy "to be credible to the American people, it would have to be accompanied by changes in personnel."

¹⁹² Ibid. Rumsfeld suggested to Bush that he "might need fresh eyes on Iraq."

¹⁹³ Ibid., 372. Bush met with Gates the weekend prior to the mid-term elections to offer him the position of secretary of defense. Gates, a member of the Baker-Hamilton Commission, was in support of a troop surge in Iraq. At this same meeting, Bush indicated that he wanted to replace Casey with Petraeus. 377. Gates was sworn in as Secretary of Defense on December 18, 2006.

witnessed previously between Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, the Petraeus appointment only added in strengthening this relationship.¹⁹⁵ These changes facilitated a fresh, holistic perspective and reinforced that any deviation in strategy was in fact a change from the past, a new way forward in Iraq.

By 2007, Iraq was a “melting pot” of terrorist, insurgents, criminals, and militia, both foreign and domestic. With each entity possessing their own logic, the term “AIF” was irrelevant. According to Multi-National Corps-Iraq assessments, six threats existed within Iraq. First, sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia, mostly in Baghdad and its belts, threatened to tear the country apart. Second, al Qaeda and al Qaeda in Iraq, proved to be catalyst or accelerants to violence in Baghdad, Anbar Province, Baqubah, Samarra, Kirkuk, and Mosul. Third, Sunni insurgents, predominately former Ba’athist, took part in sectarian cleansing and attacks on American and coalition forces and the Government of Iraq. Fourth, Kurdish expansionism in the north threatened to cause violent Arab reprisal and a splintered government. Fifth, Shia on Shia violence, in Baghdad, Najaf, and Basra, contributed to instability in the Government of Iraq and its security forces. Lastly, external influence, from the likes of Iran, Syria, and Turkey, fueled overall instability by sustaining various groups with training, funds, weapons, technology, and manpower.¹⁹⁶ While this conglomeration created a complex operational environment, exasperated

¹⁹⁴ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 540-41. The appointment of Gates to replace Rumsfeld “began to reset” Rice’s “own thinking” concerning the way ahead in Iraq. Rice fully supported the change, “I could barely contain my joy.” Rice and Gates “had a long-standing friendship” going back to the George H.W. Bush’s administration. Thus, in 2007 and 2008, Petraeus could count on true whole of government support.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 541. “My faith in a new start was reinforced when I later learned that Bob intended to appoint David Petraeus to succeed George Casey.” 545. Rice “respected him [Petraeus] enormously for his intelligence and his strategic sense.” Additionally, Rice felt the same way about Odierno, who had been her Joint Staff liaison. Given the trifecta of Gates-Petraeus-Odierno, Rice was confident that any surge would accompany a new operational approach.

¹⁹⁶ “MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus”, February 8, 2007, slide #8 entitled “Different Fights, Different Areas, Different Approaches” in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 358-59. See this slide for a breakdown of each threat’s objectives, manifestations/indicators, locations, and approach.

by sectarian violence, opportunity was abundant in 2007. According to Petraeus, “there were very few good guys or bad guys, and certainly no anti-Iraqi forces” in Iraq.¹⁹⁷ He “demanded a mind-set shift”—one that perceived opportunity in all entities except those he deemed the irreconcilables.¹⁹⁸

Thus, from Casey to Petraeus, purpose ultimately remained focused on enabling the Government of Iraq; however, strategic context was such that by 2007, this purpose gained new resolve in line with Petraeus’ mind-set shift. Sense of urgency from within the White House, changes in strategic and operational leadership, a new appreciation of the adversary, and a new strategy all facilitated a revitalized and unified purpose within Multi-National Forces-Iraq. Purpose took on a meaning more than just quickly handing over to the Iraqis. It transformed into empowering the Government of Iraq to take over from a position of relative strategic advantage with this narrative pervading tactical actions.

Recognizing that purpose was a derivative of the strategic context that surrounded Casey and Petraeus’ specific operational approach, this last section will look at their tactical actions given their respective context. The operational artist must nest his actions given strategic purpose. Strategy provides the end state which allows the operational artist to plan and execute tactical actions in purpose. In Casey and Petraeus’ case, purpose gained resolve from one perspective to the other. Tactical action under Casey focused on tangible political milestones such as elections and passing of legislation, while under Petraeus the focus was on intangibles such as Iraqi’s everyday welfare and security. In acknowledging that strategic context contributed to this dynamic, the elements of operational design and/or tenets of unified land operations provide useful conceptual tools to analyze how each command incorporated purpose within their campaign design and execution. This analysis follows next.

¹⁹⁷ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 282.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

While sporadic Multi-National Forces-Iraq led offensive operations, as previously highlighted in Najaf, Fallujah, and Samarra, occurred during Casey's command, they were not indicative of the overall approach.¹⁹⁹ Iraqi government and security force development were the keys to victory given the strategic context.²⁰⁰ While Multi-National Forces-Iraq often took initial lead in operations, this was temporary. The burden for security and development often shifted to the Government of Iraq and its security forces. Tactical action embodied the wisdom of T.E. Lawrence, legendary early twentieth century British Army officer, who emphasized placing the onus on "the Arabs."²⁰¹ This historical precedent played out again in Iraq from 2004 through 2006 with the onus residing on the Government of Iraq and its security forces.²⁰²

Additionally, 2005 witnessed an increased organizational focus on counterinsurgency doctrine. This emphasis drove actions such as a counterinsurgency academy in Taji, the Anbar Awakening, and offensive operations in the northern city of Tal Afar. The Taji Counterinsurgency Academy "preached the importance of using measured force to avoid

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 232. To support Operation TOGETHER FORWARD I and II, Casey requested the extension of the 172nd Stryker Brigade. The brigade reinforced Baghdad. While this action appeared to be a military solution, Casey did not see it that way. He did not see it as a departure from Multi-National Forces-Iraq's campaign plan. After making the decision to extend the 172nd, Casey emphasized to Rumsfeld and Abizaid that "he wasn't losing faith in the strategy all three of them had decided upon."

²⁰⁰ Bush, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," 1. President Bush highlights these keys within the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* under the heading "Our Strategy for Victory is clear." Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 229. In mid-2006, despite Iraq facing overwhelming sectarian violence, "Casey still believed that the new government could unite the country." Additionally, Casey wanted to go ahead with U.S. troop reductions. Throughout his command, Casey supported continued transition to Iraqis while decreasing the U.S. footprint within Iraqi society.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 205. T.E. Lawrence, "27 Articles," *The Arab Bulletin*, August 20, 1917, <http://www.usma.edu/dmi/IWmsgs/The27ArticlesofT.E.Lawrence.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2011). Casey's operational approach resembled T.E. Lawrence's actions during the Arab Revolt against Ottoman Turkish rule of 1916-1918. Lawrence stressed, "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them." This was Article 15 of Lawrence's 27 Articles. This idea was so ingrained, that by 2005, most units posted the statement in their tactical operation centers.

²⁰² Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 205.

alienating the Iraqi people and stressed the importance of mentoring Iraqi forces.”²⁰³ It was Casey’s attempt to change how unit’s operated tactically in Iraq.²⁰⁴ Despite this renewed emphasis on placing the security burden on Iraqi security forces, some Multi-National Forces-Iraq leaders took a slightly different approach. In October 2005, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, led by McMaster, regained control of Tal Afar through operations based on the counterinsurgency approach of “clear, hold, build.” While results such as Tal Afar proved positive, they were not the norm with other areas deteriorating due to Multi-National Forces-Iraq’s train and transition strategy which emphasized placing an “Iraqi face” to daily operations. The Iraqi Security Forces increasingly took over responsibility for many areas throughout Iraq as Multi-National Forces-Iraq elements retrograded to the periphery, believing that decreased force presence would lower communal instability. From forward operating bases, Multi-National Forces-Iraq continued to aggressively target primarily al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents. By 2006, the security situation was such that Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted three division level operations designed to secure Baghdad.²⁰⁵ In these operations, Multi-National Division-Baghdad and the Iraqi Security Forces “placed a far greater emphasis on the pace of clearing operations than on holding and rebuilding.”²⁰⁶ Given this tendency and lack of resolve from the Iraqi government and security forces, all three operations proved ineffective in securing Baghdad.²⁰⁷ This

²⁰³ Ibid., 204-05. The school began in November 2005 at Camp Taji, Iraq.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 201-02. In the summer of 2005, Casey tasked Colonel Bill Hix and Kalev Sepp, two of his counterinsurgency advisors, to visit and evaluate thirty-one different units in Iraq. Their report concluded that most U.S. units lacked understanding of counterinsurgency. This report helped cultivate organizational energy toward counterinsurgency concepts in Multi-National Forces-Iraq.

²⁰⁵ Ballard, *From Storm to Freedom: America’s Long War with Iraq*, 196. Operation SCALES OF JUSTICE took place in March 2006. Operations TOGETHER FORWARD I and II occurred in July and August, respectively. All three operations strived “to fully integrate Iraqi Security Forces into a more broadly representative coalition with Iraqi forces taking a more prominent role.”

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ James A. Baker III, and Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward — A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 48. In the wake of Operation TOGETHER FORWARD II, “violence in Baghdad jumped more than 43 percent between the summer and October 2006.”

ineffectiveness strengthened an already dominant narrative among the Iraqi populace that the American effort at large combined with the Iraqi Security Forces lacked resolve and unified purpose.

During Casey's command, the purpose of tactical actions was to enable the establishment and development of the Government of Iraq and its security forces. To achieve this purpose, Casey's first campaign plan, issued on August 5, 2004, stressed "full spectrum counterinsurgency operations" to include the "simultaneous conduct of offensive, defensive, and stability operations (already long underway) in support of a new Iraqi Government."²⁰⁸ The new plan emphasized four lines of effort: security, governance, economic development, and communications. The main effort "was to make the series of elections in 2005 viable and legitimate by neutralizing the insurgency." In 2004, offensive operations in An Najaf, Fallujah, Samarra, and Sadr City went toward this main effort. In addition to these operations, Multi-National Forces-Iraq focused on "securing the capital and fourteen other key cities, controlling Iraq's borders, and preparing the Iraqi Security Forces to support the elections."²⁰⁹ As his campaign progressed into 2005, Casey continued to focus on neutralizing insurgent elements from influencing the electoral process. Operations in Al Qaim and Tal Afar took advantage of operational reach and anticipation in order to interdict al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgent lines of communication.²¹⁰ While the western Euphrates River valley and Tigris River valley corridors provided insurgent elements basing and freedom of maneuver, Multi-National Forces-Iraq applied just enough force in key cities, such as Ramadi, to enable the December 2005 elections. By temporarily spiking operations prior to

²⁰⁸ General George W. Casey, Jr., interview by Contemporary Operations Study Team, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 27 November 2007, 3. Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 178.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 4. Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 178.

²¹⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-33. In planning, anticipation involves considering what might happen and looking for the signs that may bring the possible event to pass. During execution, anticipation facilitates readiness for the unexpected and for opportunities to exploit the situation. Al Qaim is on the border of Iraq and Syria. Sunni insurgents used this town to facilitate their movements of personnel, weapons, and supplies into Baghdad and other areas.

political milestones, Casey was able to gain reach while avoiding culmination. Overall, despite having four lines of effort, Multi-National Forces-Iraq focused primarily on security and governance.²¹¹ In successfully accomplishing stated political milestones combined with a robust security force assistance effort, Casey believed a secure and stable Iraq was possible.²¹²

Almost immediately after arriving in Baghdad in February 2007, General Petraeus wasted little time in officially implementing a new operational approach. On February 8, 2007, just one day after arriving into country, Odierno presented Multi-National Corps-Iraq's proposed plan to Petraeus. In conjunction with the Iraqi Security Forces, the plan, dubbed the "Baghdad Security Plan," aimed to secure the Iraqi people, with a focus on Baghdad.²¹³ Enabled by the 2007 surge, Multi-National Forces-Iraq employed classic counterinsurgency principles similar to those used by Colonel McMaster in Tal Afar in 2005, except on a much larger scale. Thus, given the strategic context mentioned previously, Petraeus led a campaign comprised of a unified military and civilian effort focused on seizing, retaining, and exploiting the initiative.²¹⁴ Tactical actions ran the gambit: from clearing operations in Sadr City to raising chickens south of Baghdad.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Security encompassed security force assistance and offensive operations designed to interdict insurgent networks while governance included elections and constitutional referendums.

²¹² Casey, interview by Contemporary Operations Study Team, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 27 November 2007, 4. Wright and Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, 178. "The key to defeating the insurgent enemy, Casey believed, was to drive a wedge between insurgents and the Iraqi people by demonstrating the effectiveness of the new Interim Iraqi Government."

²¹³ "MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus, February 8, 2007, Commander's Intent, slide #12" in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 363. "MNC-I Mission Statement: MNC-I conducts combat, stability, and support operations in coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces to secure the population, defeat terrorists and irreconcilable extremists, neutralize insurgent and militia groups, and transition responsibilities to the ISF in order to reduce violence, gain the support of the people, stabilize Iraq, and enable Government of Iraq security self-reliance. NLT December 2007, we will establish stability and create irreversible momentum with the Iraqi population, the Government of Iraq and ISF toward the ultimate goal of self-reliance."

²¹⁴ David H. Petraeus, "Memorandum to MNF-I, 10 February 2007," February 10, 2007. Petraeus emphasizes the criticality of the current situation in Iraq. He reiterates to all Multi-National Forces-Iraq personnel that, "we will conduct a pivotal campaign to improve security for the Iraqi people." He goes on to state that, "We cannot allow mass murders to hold the initiative."

²¹⁵ Cloud and Jaffe, *The fourth star : four generals and the epic struggle for the future of the United States Army*, 280-81.

Despite this diverse spectrum of operations, the purpose of Multi-National Forces-Iraq's tactical actions was to reduce violence, gain support of the people, stabilize Iraq, and enable Iraqi Government security self-reliance.²¹⁶ To accomplish this, a combination of military, economic, and political actions gained equity within Petraeus' campaign plan. Militarily, four successive, large scale offensive operations during 2007 and 2008 interdicted accelerants of Baghdad sectarian violence emerging from the capital and peripheral provinces.²¹⁷ These offensives drove al Qaeda in Iraq out of its sanctuaries in and around Baghdad. Within the capital, established joint security stations provided local security facilitating all four facets of purpose. Economically, Petraeus took advantage of a surge in civilian resources to generate economic growth in poor neighborhoods allowing for the creation of a combination of near-term and long-term employment opportunities and improvement of basic services within Baghdad and other areas. Politically, Petraeus' campaign "set benchmarks to address the dismantling of Shia militias, deal with de-Baathification, and move towards provincial and local elections."²¹⁸

Ultimately, Petraeus' emphasis on all lines of efforts throughout his campaign facilitated operational reach and depth garnering the Iraqi government and security forces a position of relative strategic advantage. Al Qaeda in Iraq and Sunni insurgents faced culmination due to synergy and integration between Multi-National Forces-Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces. Unity of purpose between Multi-National Forces-Iraq and Joint Special Operations Command elements allowed Petraeus to negate and deter influence from Shia extremist and Iranian special groups. By

²¹⁶ "MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus, February 8, 2007, MNC-I Mission Statement, slide #12" in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 362.

²¹⁷ "MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus, February 8, 2007, Commander's Intent, slide #13" in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 363. Accelerants included improvised explosive device networks. Peripheral provinces included southern Salah ad Din, Eastern Diyala, and Western Anbar Province.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

seeking population security first, Multi-National Forces-Iraq forged a new narrative that “filled the gap” between Iraqi individuals and their government, much needed by 2007.²¹⁹

The campaigns of Casey and Petraeus were indicative of their respective strategic context. While both campaigns shared the same purpose, there were many strategic factors that caused each command to employ different operational design and execution. This paper will emphasize just three: counterinsurgency doctrine, strategic means, and civil-military interdependency. These factors influenced the arrangement of tactical action in purpose, providing opportunity and/or limitation. By contrasting each commander’s operational design and execution given this dynamic, strategic context’s significance relative to purpose within Iraq, from 2004 through 2008, will resonate, complimenting tactical actions in time and space, already discussed.

First, the operational approach implemented from Casey to Petraeus demonstrated maturation in logic. Upon taking over Multi-National Forces-Iraq in July 2004, Casey’s forces lacked coherent and vetted counterinsurgency doctrine. Although the Army published *Field Manual 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations* in October 2004, this document lacked comprehensiveness and fidelity, demonstrating counterinsurgency’s inadequacy within Army doctrine during this time.²²⁰ While Casey attempted to impart appreciation for counterinsurgency through the Taji Counterinsurgency Academy, his campaign continued to focus on the Iraqi government and security forces in lieu of a more population-centric approach. Al Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent elements exploited this opportunity and forged a gap between the Iraqi populace and the government. While Casey’s campaign struggled to cope against the growing insurgency, Petraeus drafted a new counterinsurgency manual while at Fort Leavenworth in 2006.

²¹⁹ “MNC-I Inbrief GEN Petraeus, February 8, 2007, Filling the Gap Facilitates Sustainable Victory in Iraq, slide #3” in Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, 352.

²²⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations*.

Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, published in December 2006, emphasized “clear, hold, build” and “combined-action” approaches.²²¹ According to the new manual, these approaches involved significant ground force employment. The key for the counterinsurgent was securing the populace. This theory formed the foundation behind Petraeus’ operational approach from 2007 through 2008. Given its influence on operational design and execution in 2007, counterinsurgency doctrine’s evolution and maturation proved significant from Casey to Petraeus. While the doctrine was not revolutionary, having existed in various forms from T.E. Lawrence to David Galula, it was evolutionary in terms of operational understanding and appreciation.²²² In contrasting the context in counterinsurgency doctrine from Casey to Petraeus, the significance was in purpose behind action.

In strategy, ends, ways, and means must be in congruence. Often a change in means facilitates a change in ways, influencing operational design and execution. In Iraq in 2007, to fulfill a new operational approach focused on protecting the Iraqi populace, significant resources in terms of manpower were necessary. This underscores the difference between the campaigns of Casey and Petraeus. While both campaigns had the same purpose, they split when it came to strategic resolve. Resolve came in the form of the surge in 2007. President Bush’s decision to deploy additional military and civilian manpower and resources proved significant in providing Petraeus the needed operational reach and depth. Petraeus directed multiple simultaneous offensive operations unified in a renewed purpose. Conversely, Casey relied on reactive offensive operations geared toward enabling the Iraqi government and security forces. While the goal was to quickly transfer responsibility for security and governance to the Government of Iraq, Multi-

²²¹ David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 110.

²²² Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, 1-4. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1964).

National Forces-Iraq achieved the necessary operational reach through isolated small scale offensive operations. Thus, given their purpose in context, Petraeus enjoyed the influx in combat forces allowing him to conduct coherent “clear, hold, build” operations while in Casey’s approach, he strived for a “light footprint.” In both campaigns, strategic resolve in purpose underscored force request and allocation, significantly influencing operational art.

In integrating political and military strategy, unity of purpose between civilian and military leadership proved significant in Iraq from 2004 through 2008. Civilian-military dissension reinforced by political agendas negated unity of effort and purpose during Casey’s tenure. Tension between Rumsfeld and Rice set the conditions for a divergence in purpose.²²³ In contrast, Petraeus enjoyed civilian-military synergy due to a positive relationship between Gates, Rice, Crocker, and Odierno, affording Multi-National Forces-Iraq additional options operationally.²²⁴ Petraeus’ unified civilian-military effort placed diplomatic pressure on Maliki, instrumental in softening his stance toward Shia extremist and militias by 2008. This allowed Petraeus to extend operational reach toward Basra and along the border with Iran. This reach interdicted Shia insurgent lines of communication and deterred Iranian special groups from operating with the impunity previous 2007. Being able to conduct tactical actions against Shia elements proved decisive in stemming violence in Baghdad by 2008. President Bush’s change in strategic and operational leadership combined with Maliki’s operational maturation placed Multi-National Forces-Iraq’s campaign back on course, derailed previously due to multiplicity of purpose.

Conclusion

On March 19, 2003, American and British forces launched Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Three weeks later, on April 9th, in Baghdad's Firdos Square, U.S. Marines toppled

²²³ Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, 540-41.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 371, 540-41.

the statue of Saddam Hussein. This iconic moment, symbolizing the fall of the capital and the regime, soon gave way to chaos as the American occupation in Iraq commenced in the summer of 2003. While not covered in this paper, the first year of the occupation struggled to cope with an increasingly volatile and complex operational environment. Inheriting this situation, General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad, from July 2004 through January 2007, embraced a “train and transition” approach predicated on Iraqi political development.²²⁵ As Multi-National Forces-Iraq conducted sporadic major combat operations and expedited security force assistance, conditions steadily deteriorated in and around Baghdad as sectarian violence spiraled out of control. Though the “stand up/stand down” approach struggled to gain traction given the operational environment, it was not without value.²²⁶ The Bush administration came to realize that its strategy, the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, was fundamentally flawed in terms of ways and means. As Casey steadfastly implemented a campaign based on this strategy, operational opportunity and tactical understanding slowly emerged within Iraq. Tactical actions in such places as Tal Afar in 2005 and Anbar Province in 2006 provided the impetus for action in 2007 and beyond. Guided by a new strategy, the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, that included a surge in means, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker embraced a population-centric counterinsurgency approach from February 2007 through September 2008. By the end of 2007, the chaos, that was Baghdad and Iraq overall, faced atrophy at the hands of a joint and combined campaign that exploited tensions brought out previously under Casey. This success continued into 2008 facilitating growth within the Iraqi government and military. In a year and a half, the operational environment underwent a fundamental shift, so much so, that Prime Minister Maliki, a Shia, directed military action against Shia in southern Iraq.

²²⁵ Thomas Donnelly and Frederick W. Kagan, *Ground Truth: The Future of U.S. Land Power* (Washington, DC: The AEI Press, 2008), 59.

²²⁶ Feaver, “The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision,” *International Security*, 99. The media dubbed Bush’s strategy as “stand-up/stand-down.”

The cause of this dramatic turnaround remains convoluted and difficult to isolate. Some argue that the Iraqis “essentially figured out their problems.”²²⁷ Some argue that the surge along with its new approach was the primary stimuli. While others argue “that a number of factors were at play, and it's hard to tell which was the most important.”²²⁸ What must be realized is that this debate is irrelevant. Success was relative to the changing conditions within the operational environment. These conditions both constrained and provided opportunity. The Casey-Petraeus continuum provides a case study in which this dynamic takes place, resulting in differing tactical action due to fluctuations in understanding of time, space, and purpose within context. This dynamic underlies the significance of strategic context within the parameters of operational art. Thus, given the logic just mentioned, the take away for operational planners is three-fold. First, relative to Iraq from 2004 through 2008, strategic context’s impact resides in the application of operational art. Second, operational art applies in counterinsurgency just as well as in conventional operations. Lastly, the Army’s current doctrinal definition of operational art is both relevant and practical given this case study.

This paper shows just how much strategic context mattered to operational planning, relative to Iraq from 2004 through 2008. Tactical actions under Casey and Petraeus were a product of strategic context. Casey saw time as being linked to political milestones, space as temporary, and purpose as disjointed. Strategic variables such as the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, civil-military relations, personalities and agendas of strategic leaders, maturation of doctrine, emergence of al Qaeda in Iraq, and rise of sectarian violence, all significantly impacted

²²⁷ Tom Bowman, “As the Iraq War Ends, Reassessing the U.S. Surge” *National Public Radio*, December 16, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/16/143832121/as-the-iraq-war-ends-reassessing-the-u-s-surge> (accessed December 12, 2011). Doug Ollivant, former Army planner for Petraeus during the surge holds the view that “what happened in Iraq had less to do with the Americans and more to do with deep political and social forces inside Iraq.”

²²⁸ Ibid. Kim Kagan, author of *The Surge: A Military History*, argues that “It was the larger American military presence that convinced Sunnis to work with the Americans.” John Nagl, a retired Army officer who helped write *Field Manual 3-24*, believes that a multiplicity of factors led to the operational shift in 2007.

tactical action from 2004 through 2006. In the face of this context, Casey's tactical actions resembled isolated and sporadic offensive operations focused on setting the conditions for elections and governmental referendums. The theory of action behind his campaign was "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." The path to security and stability was governance. In contrast, Petraeus saw time as short, but manipulative, space as both concrete and conceptual, and purpose as unified and transformed. Strategic context such as the *New Way Forward in Iraq*, presidential urgency domestically and abroad, the surge, diplomacy, counterinsurgency doctrinal inculcation, al Qaeda in Iraq overextension, counter-balance of Iranian influence, and sectarian cleansing, all significantly influenced tactical action from 2007 through 2008. Given this context, Petraeus conducted multiple, simultaneous corps and division level operations spanning the complex urban terrain of Baghdad to the open expansive farmland and desert of the western Euphrates River valley and Tigris River valley. The theory behind his campaign was population security. The path to governmental and economic prosperity was population security first. Ultimately, Casey and Petraeus took what strategic context afforded them and executed accordingly.

The Casey-Petraeus continuum underscores the applicability of operational art in counterinsurgency and strengthens the inclusiveness of current doctrine. Just as in major combat operations, tactical actions in counterinsurgency operations must be arranged appropriately to reach a strategic objective. This appropriateness has to do with the factors of time, space, and purpose in relation to strategic context. These three factors hold true in counterinsurgency. Casey's campaign showed how the pursuit of strategic objectives can go awry based on the interaction between strategic context and the factors of time, space, and purpose. Conversely, Petraeus' campaign demonstrated how the pursuit is much more efficient and effective when this interaction is cogent and relevant. If anything, 2004 through 2008 in Iraq demonstrated that operational art in counterinsurgency is needed more than ever due to the significance of strategic context that must be accounted for in planning and execution at all levels to include tactical.

While the Iraq campaigns of Casey and Petraeus help to support the current definition of operational art contained in *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, they also illustrate the applicability of current operational design doctrine which advocates the use of conceptual tools to help commanders and their staffs develop and refine the commander's operational approach, which guides planning and shapes the concept of operations.²²⁹ Given the complex operational environment that was Iraq from 2004 through 2008, the elements of operational design and tenets of unified land operations illuminated the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. These elements and tenets provided guideposts to ensure accountability for all the opportunity and/or limitation that was strategic context during those years. For operational planners going forward, this paper underscores just how significant strategic context can be in maximizing tactical actions in time, space, and purpose from one command to another over time. This evolution in operational art encompasses the story of Casey and Petraeus, countering the narrative and mystique surrounding the surge. Their campaigns complete the story of pursuit and transformation from the dark days of July 10, 2006 when sectarian death squads ravaged the streets of Baghdad to the bright days of 2008 when street life returned and the Iraqi people saw hope instead of despair.

In summary, the contextual narrative influencing Casey and Petraeus was inescapable and unrelenting. The highly talked about surge was just one of many variables that contributed to tactical action in Iraq. To their credit, Casey and Petraeus acknowledged, embraced, and exploited as best they could this context in their planning. The goal was “a unified democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror.”²³⁰ While this end state was enduring, the strategic context was different, leading and

²²⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, III-18.

²³⁰ National Security Council, “Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review (Summary Briefing Slides).”

contributing to a fundamental shift in the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose from Casey to Petraeus, the operational artists.

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